The Northern Territory now has its first Children’s Commissioner as Dr Howard Bath’s full functions come into effect from tomorrow – bringing the NT into line with all other Australian jurisdictions.

“This is a very big day for the Northern Territory and a significant step forward in ensuring the protection and wellbeing of children,” Ms McCarthy said.

“The Children’s Commissioner is a statutory independent role to act as an advocate for children and represent their interest at all levels of government and the community.

“He will be pivotal to ensuring the wellbeing of the Territory’s children in care and he will be instrumental in improving services to these children.”

Dr Bath is a nationally respected clinical psychologist who has extensive experience working with young people, particularly youth with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

He has studied and taught in Australia and the United States and is widely published in the areas of behaviour management and out-of-home care.

Dr Bath was appointed in June, and has spent the past six months travelling the Territory meeting with organisations and community groups.

“Since taking on this role in June, Dr Bath has been making his way around the Territory meeting with a wide variety of organisations and people, hearing the real concerns and views of all Territorians and making a real effort to get out to all communities,” Ms McCarthy said.

“And from tomorrow Dr Bath will from be able to investigate complaints relating to children in care, as well as reviewing and monitoring the child protection and out of home care system,” Ms McCarthy said.

“This is a significant step forward for the Territory, and is part of a raft of measures the NT Government has introduced to better improve child protection services in the Territory.

“These include permanently establishing the Child Protection Taskforce in Darwin and expanding to Central Australia; establishing the mobile child protection teams; and the implementation of the Care and Protection Act to replace the Territory’s 24 year old Welfare Act.”

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