LEGISLATING DOUBLE STANDARDS

The Henderson Government’s reforms to the mandatory reporting provisions of the Care and Protection of Children Act make a mockery of the Government’s claims it cares about child protection.

Shadow Justice Minister Jodeen Carney said it was a disgrace the Government’s reforms failed to provide maximum legal protection for children aged between 14 and 16.

“For children aged under 14 who are, or are likely to be, victims of a sexual offence, members of the public cannot be guilty of a failure to report to the authorities,” Ms Carney said.

“In contrast, health practitioners face prosecution if they fail to report children aged between 14 and 16 if they are likely to be a victim of a sexual offence.

“The problem with the Government’s Bill is that by definition, children aged between 14 and 16 are treated differently by the Government to children aged under 14 – and so are people who don’t report if they believe children have been pr are likely to be a victim of a sexual offence.

“What about children over the age of 14 years but under 16 years? If a person has a belief that a child of 15 years is likely to be a victim of a sexual offence, they are not required to report it.

“The Government’s Bill is that it prescribes two standards: one for health practitioners and one for everyone else.”

Ms Carney said the Government’s arrogance was highlighted by the Attorney General, Delia Lawrie’s, offensive reference to community anger at the original mandatory reporting provisions saying: A bit of hysteria was whipped up, I believe, by the CLP.

“This is a slap in the face to respected organisations like the Australian Medical Association, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance, The Royal Australian College of GPs and the Royal Australian College of Physicians.”
Ms Carney said adding to her frustration was that she introduced an Opposition Bill on Tuesday which would have ironed out these inconsistencies.

“Government MLAs and Independent Gerry Wood have had plenty of time to consider the merits of both our Bills – but have refused to make the necessary changes I’ve outlined.

“My plan has received endorsement from both the Law – but the Government has decided to reject it.

“With the formation of a so-called Council of Territory Co-operation in the wings, I’d have thought Paul Henderson and Gerry Wood would have acted in the spirit of bi-partisanism and endorsed what was the superior plan.”

Further comment: Jodeen Carney 0497 187 992