Jodeen Carney
Shadow Minister for Child Protection

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OBSTRUCTING THE OMBUDSMAN

The Territory Opposition is demanding an end to the Henderson Government’s cover-up of the crisis in child protection in the Northern Territory.

“The first step is for the Child Protection Minister to guarantee the Ombudsman will have unfettered access to any documentation she requests as part of her investigation into the child protection system,” says Jodeen Carney, Shadow Minister for Child Protection.

“It is disgraceful that the Henderson Government has systematically obstructed the Ombudsman’s investigation of its dysfunctional child protection system.

“It is the role of the Ombudsman to investigate when Government systems fail; it is the obligation of Governments to facilitate those investigations.

“The lack of public scrutiny of the dangerous failings of the child protection system is putting vulnerable children at greater risk of harm.

“The Henderson Government must also immediately release the two reports into child protection authored by Dr Howard Bath.

“Media reports based on a leaked copy of the 2007 Bath Report indicate the decision to suppress the Report was concerned with protecting the reputation of the Government not children at risk of harm.

“It's critical the Henderson Government puts the children first and releases the 2007 Bath Report and provides an accurate assessment of how many of its recommendations have been implemented.

“Equally shameful was the decision of the Minister Kon Vatskalis to suppress the 2009 intake report into child protection services also authored by Dr Bath.

“Again protecting the Henderson Government has come before protecting vulnerable children as the Minister sought to avoid scrutiny as to how a motherless baby ended up with brain damage.

“The suppression of the 2009 Bath Report occurred despite a commitment by the previous Minister to make the Report public on ABC television on the 30th of October.

MELINDA JAMES: We never saw the last major report from Doctor Bath in 2007 - will this report be made public?

MALARNDIRRI MCCARTHY: This report will be made public as far as it's able to in terms of confidentiality. Of course if it does refer to specific clients, that is going to depend on Dr Bath in terms of how he can talk about particular clients but as far as I'm concerned this document will be public.

“The Henderson Government must end its culture of cover-up.”

Further comment: Jodeen Carney 0407 187 992