NT Government Spends More on Child Protection in Australia

The NT Government spends almost three times more per capita on child protection services than the national average, Child Protection Minister Kon Vatskalis said.

Mr Vatskalis has today refuted claims that the NT Government spends only part of Commonwealth Grant Commission (CGC) funding on Children and Families – saying that the CGC does not provide funding allocations per portfolio.

“In 2007/08 the Territory spent an average of $331 per person compared to an average of $133 per person in other states and territories,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“The Northern Territory has unique challenges in delivering child protection services and in recognition of these challenges the NT Government spends significantly more per capita on family and children services than anywhere else in Australia.

“The funding formula of the Commonwealth Grants Commission does not dictate the way funds are spent – states and territories have the discretion as to how they use their share of funding.

“Since 2005 the NT Government has increased the child protection budget by around 117%, boosted child protection workers to 213, increased services to the bush and brought in mobile child protection teams in Alice Springs and Darwin.

“In calling the independent Board of Inquiry last year the Government recognised that there is more to be done and greater investment required.

“I have said repeatedly that my priority is the welfare of children and I will make any necessary changes to the system to ensure their safety is paramount.”

Mr Vatskalis said he looked forward to receiving the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry, which is headed up by three eminent experts in child protection.

“This Inquiry must be given the time to hear from the public and receive submissions, and I will certainly make the changes needed to strengthen our system.”

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