The damning self-assessment contained in the Department of Health and Families submission to the Board of Inquiry into Child Protection makes a mockery of the Government’s assurances that the agency is being reformed.

Shadow Child Protection Minister, Jodeen Carney, said the submission has been made public days after the Minister, Kon Vatskalis, fronted Estimates and spoke of change within the Department, during which he said:

‘I would not say we are perfect, I would not say we are very, very good; I will say we are doing better than we were doing before’.

“It turns out the Minister was talking nonsense – and he knew it,” Ms Carney said.

“In October, former Minister Malamndirri McCarthy also tried to hide the systemic problems when she told the ABC’s Stateline program:

‘We’ve improved in terms of the statistics and being able to remove children.’

“The former Minister added that the Government would initiate drastic change if it’s needed.

“Eight months later there’s been no change, only talk.

“The agency’s submission says the system isn’t just bad – it’s broken – and confirms the massive schism between Government rhetoric and reality when it comes to child protection.

“It highlights significant problems in funding, resourcing, staffing, training and the safety of child protection workers.

“During Estimates, the Minister provided a confused summary of where the Government’s additional child protection budget would be spent.

“It was unclear as to where the extra resources were being deployed or, indeed, how many actual child protection workers would be added to the system, and when.

“This reflects the lack of structure and system that has plagued child protection in the Territory.

“The Minister should stop talking and prevaricating and do what his Department recommends – and that is get on with the crucial business of fixing the Territory’s broken child protection system.”

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