The NT Government has acted swiftly and responsibly to the most comprehensive Inquiry into child protection undertaken in the Territory.

Child Protection Minister Kon Vatskalis said on top of the dedicated $135 million annual budget for child protection, the NT Government has allocated an additional $130 million over five years to transform the system – this is in comparison to the CLP leaving the budget at a meagre $7 million in 2001.

“I am glad to see the Opposition finally taking an interest in this area, but their new child protection spokesperson is uninformed and clearly has not got her head across the significant reforms currently being carried out,’ Mr Vatskalis said.

“Not only are we creating a dedicated – stand alone - child protection agency, but we have acted very quickly to allocate additional resources to address the Board of Inquiry’s recommendations.

“This includes funding for an additional 42 child protection professional workers – on top of the 76 positions funded in the last budget.

“This Government promised to provide regular progress reports through the implementation of a Reform Steering Committee and provide regular updates to Parliament which we have been doing.

“Just last week I announced non-government provider Lifestyle Solutions as being appointed to provide emergency residential care in Darwin for the next 12 months.”

Mr Vatskalis said since the Inquiry was handed down last month there had been ongoing advancement on the recommendations including:

- Ongoing negotiations with AMSANT to establish the peak aboriginal NGO body
- The funding of a position at NTCOSS to coordinate and boost NGO capacity
- The announcement of the chair and members of the Reform steering Committee – the Government’s commitment to external accountability in progressing the Inquiry’s recommendations
- The secondment of 10 highly experienced child protection professionals from New Zealand who will be dedicated to continuing to reduce the investigation backlog.
“In contrast, all that the opposition has done is announce their revised policy the day before the Inquiry and slap a $9 million dollar figure to it.

“The Government looks forward to updating the public on progress and further initiatives to strengthen child safety and wellbeing in the Territory. “

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