THE DEBACLE THAT ALLOWED PRISONERS TO WORK IN A DARWIN CHILD CARE CENTRE SHOWS THE LACK OF RIGOR THIS GOVERNMENT APPLIES TO CHILD PROTECTION AND HIGHLIGHTS FAILURES IN THE OPERATION OF THE OCHRE CARD.

SHADOW CHILD PROTECTION MINISTER, ROBYN LAMBLEY, SAID ALLOWING PRISONERS WITHIN CLOSE PROXIMITY OF CHILDREN FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE CARD.

"TODAY IN ESTIMATES IT WAS REVEALED 32,738 OCHRE CARDS HAD BEEN ISSUED ACROSS THE TERRITORY, ALTHOUGH THEIR VALUE IN PREVENTING UNDESI RABLES FROM INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN IS QUESTIONABLE," MS LAMBLEY SAID.

ON THE ONE HAND THE GOVERNMENT GOES TO THE ABSOLUTE EXTREME AND MANDATES THAT ANYBODY WHOSE WORK INVOLVES CONTACT WITH CHILDREN REQUIRE AN OCHRE CARD, BUT ON THE OTHER PRISONERS WHO WORK IN CHILD CARE CENTRES ARE EXEMPT.

"IT'S NO WONDER PARENTS ARE INCENSED.

THE OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OCHRE CARD HAS BEEN SLOW AND MANY ANOMALIES HAVE EMERGED.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN 'CONVICTED' OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT ARE INELIGIBLE FOR AN OCHRE CARD, BUT A NUMBER OF ADULTS WHO HAVE HAD A CHILD REMOVED FROM THEIR CARE WITHOUT A CONVICTION REMAIN ELIGIBLE.

FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES – THERE IS NO CONVICTION OR EVEN A COURT CASE.

THE OCHRE CARD WILL ONLY SERVE TO EXCLUDE THE EXTREME OFFENDERS OF CHILD ABUSE.

CHRONICALLY NEGLECTFUL CARERS AND PARENTS WITHOUT CONVICTION WILL SLIP THROUGH THE GAPS AND BE ELIGIBLE.

THE QUESTION HAS TO BE ASKED - WOULDN'T A BASIC POLICE CHECK SUFFICE IF AN OCHRE CARD IS ONLY IDENTIFYING CRIMINALS?

"THERE IS ALREADY A NEED TO REVIEW HOW EFFECTIVE THE OCHRE CARD IS IN PROTECTING CHILDREN. THE VALUE OF A CARD THAT ONLY IDENTIFIES EXTREME OFFENDERS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A CONVICTION HAS TO BE QUESTIONED."

FURTHER COMMENT: ROBYN LAMBLEY 0428 040 693