ENHANCING CHILD PROTECTION THROUGH SCHOOLS

October 11th, 2012

The Department of Children and Families will integrate with the Department of Education and Department of Health in a major enhancement of the Territory’s child protection services.

Children and Families Minister, Robyn Lambley, said the changes will dovetail key agencies charged with protecting the Territory’s children and facilitate closer co-ordination between service providers in these key areas of Government.

The changes will see:

- The establishment of the Office of Children and Families within the newly named Department of Education and Children’s Services.
- The Office of Children and Families will be responsible for Early Years, Child Protection Services, Out of Home Care Services and Family Violence and Family Support.
- The transfer of Sexual Assault Services from Children and Families to the Department of Health.
- The transfer of Homelessness Services from Children and Families to the Department of Housing.

“The new directions play to the strengths of the Departments at the centre of these changes,” Ms Lambley said.

“Our teachers are at the front-line with children every single day and are exposed to their development and welfare.

“By working together, educators have direct access to expert child related advice and services and child and family workers are given access to the strong school community network.

“The integration into education means families are provided with consistency of contact and allows for the better utilisation of early childhood services already provided through the education system.

“Teachers are among the largest group of child protection notifiers in the Territory.

“The changes provide a clearer communication channel between educators, child and family workers and support services for families and are consistent with the Board of Inquiry report which noted:

‘Any system aimed at protecting children must also have regard for the broader well-being and development needs of children in the context of families and communities…’

“There will be no change in the role of Head of Children and Families, who will still report to the Minister.

“The transfer of Sexual Assault Services, including the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is logical given much of the service is carried out by clinical staff.

“The Chief Executives of each department have been asked to develop transition plans to present to the Minister and staff will be fully consulted as the process proceeds. No frontline jobs will be lost and there will be no forced redundancies.

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