19 January 2013

Child Protection in Crisis

Following the tragic deaths of three children known to the Office of Child and Families in the last few weeks, the CLP Government must immediately reinstate the massive cuts that have been made to child protection.

Leader of the Opposition Delia Lawrie said Minister for Children and Families Robyn Lambley has ignored experts and slashed jobs and funding in child protection.

“The lives of children in the Territory are too important to be subject to the continuing arrogance and incompetence of Robyn Lambley,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Terry Mills should immediately remove her as Children and Families Minister and reinstate the funding she has cut and re-establish the standalone Department of Children and Families.

“Mrs Lambley’s decision to ignore the child protection experts, abandon the Growing them Strong Together Report and axe child protection funding puts children at risk and this must immediately be addressed.”

Since coming to Government, Robyn Lambley and the CLP Government has:

- Slashed child protection funding;
- Slashed jobs in the Officer of Children and Families. Between August and October 47 jobs were cut and this figure has grown since;
- Cut funding to non government agencies at the frontline of protecting children such as NAPCAN, NTCOSS and SAF,T;
- Acted against the recommendations of experts report, including Little Children are Sacred and the Board of Inquiry Report; Growing them Strong Together;
- Independent scrutiny of the CLP Government’s work in child protection has been removed with the disbanding of the Children and Families Advisory Board, and the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee;
- Acted against the Board of Inquiry’s recommendation to have Child Protection as a standalone agency but merging it with Education;
- Sacked the Coordinator General for Indigenous Affairs;
- Opened the rivers of grog by scrapping the Banned Drinkers Register.
“Mrs Lambley needs to explain whether she knew about these three tragic deaths,” Ms Lawrie said.

“If not, why, and if so, why did she cover them up? When children are dying the community should know to help prevent it happening again.

“Mrs Lambley needs to explain how scrapping the BDR has helped protect children from abuse. Every expert agrees that increased alcohol abuse leads to increased child abuse.”

Ms Lawrie said that with the tragic deaths of three children since December an urgent review of the current state of the child protection system since CLP cuts is critical.

“If they had any intention to save the lives of children they could appoint Jodeen Carney to conduct a review of child protection, taking into account Little Children are Stronger; Growing them Strong Together and the existing changes to child protection,” Ms Lawrie said.

“For the sake of the Territory’s children, child protection clearly needs an immediate independent assessment of the damage that the CLP cuts have caused.

“Ms Carney has a detailed knowledge of child protection issues and surely as a former CLP member of parliament she will be considered suitable by the Government to conduct such a review.

“Swallow your pride, cancel the cuts, restore child protection services and conduct an immediate review – for the sake of our children at risk.”

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