Territory Labor Leader, Michael Gunner, today launched Territory Labor’s Early Childhood Development discussion paper which will put children at the centre of Government.

“I intend to define the next Territory Labor Government by our commitment to the children of the Northern Territory,” Michael Gunner said.

“The Northern Territory needs a genuine commitment from Government to improve our children’s health, education and developmental outcomes. I want every one of our youngest Territorians to have a chance of achieving all they can in life.”

A Labor Government intends to:

- Develop and implement a strategic plan that fixes the uncoordinated gap between birth and the commencement of school. Our approach will be evidence based, for the long term, and focused upon real outcomes.
- Make early childhood development the centre of Government, establishing a Minister for Children, introducing early childhood impact statements for Cabinet documents and for the Department of Chief Minister to play a greater role in coordinating Government Service provision in this challenging social policy area.
- We will make the non-government sector our partners in achieving these goals.

“I want to hear feedback from parents, experts, and the community about the existing and new initiatives outlined in the Discussion Paper, what they mean to them in their own community:
- Do we need to think about outreach antenatal services, information and support in the Territory?
Should we have a nurse led home visiting program for the first two years of a child’s life in the Territory?
Do we need a referral based intensive parenting service, to help struggling parents with issues like feeding, sleeping and other behaviours?
Should we take advantage of our sophisticated e-health record system and ensure that standardised health checks occur for every year from 0-4 and issues identified are followed up?
How can we build on Families as First Teachers and Integrated Child and Family Centres and give every child a love of learning and language and support mums and dads in their parenting journey?
How can we better support vulnerable families?

“The evidence is unequivocal.

“We now know that the physical and social environment children are exposed to in their earliest months and years of life has an enormous impact on their future health, education and employment prospects.

“We need to be not only talking about, but applying all our efforts to this challenge.

“Through this policy discussion paper approach families and the whole community will have ownership over these goals and the plans to achieve them.

“I look forward to continuing to hear from Territorians as we develop our plans for early childhood development over the coming months,” Michael Gunner said.

To view the discussion paper, visit:


Media Contact: Gino Luglietti 0401 119 794