Health and Community Services Minister Jane Aagaard has instigated a review of children’s protection services, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, to address long-standing issues involving child abuse and neglect in the NT.

Mrs Aagaard said child abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities, including the Territory, is a serious issue that is being addressed by the NT Government as a matter of urgency.

"The NT Government has been working hard in the past two years to turn these outcomes around, particularly the underreporting of child abuse and neglect," Mrs Aagaard said. "I have instructed my department to contact relevant professionals to ensure they report suspected child abuse and neglect."

Since August 2001 the Territory Government has injected $2.4 million towards improving children and family services across the NT. Of this $930,000 has been for Indigenous child protection, community and family support initiatives.

Mrs Aagaard said one of the recommendations from the Bansemer Report earlier this year was to undertake a review of Children’s Protection Services to ensure greater protection for Territory children in both urban and remote communities.

"The review involves extensive assistance and liaison with the heads of the Child Protection Clearing House and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, as well as a wide range of other government and non-government stakeholders."

Mrs Aagaard said the Territory Government had:

- Created eight new positions in child protection;
- Recruited Indigenous staff to senior positions to provide advice on welfare issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- Increased the quantity of mandatory reporting training sessions provided to community agencies;
- Increased Territory funding to Karu Aboriginal Child Care Agency, as well as developed a protocol between Family And Children’s Services and Karu to clarify responsibilities to Indigenous children in care;
- Facilitated child protection training to adult indigenous students at Nungalinya College.
- Allocated $300 000 from the 2003-04 to implement a Breakfast Program for Indigenous children in communities
- Implemented mandatory domestic and family violence screening at all Territory Hospitals
"The Government is committed to tackling the serious issue of child neglect and abuse across the Territory by developing practical approaches to the problem," Mrs Aagaard.

- Introduced 25 child health positions; and
- Launched a Family Violence Strategy.
- Initiated a review of the Community Welfare Act