Minister for Health and Community Services Jane Aagaard today announced a record increase of funding into the Child Protection system over the next five years.

"Today I am announcing an injection of $53.8 million into the system over five years to protect and nurture our children – a key commitment of the NT Government," Mrs Aagaard said.

"This Government came to power knowing that Child Protection had suffered from many years of chronic underfunding and neglect.

"In each Budget since 2001, additional funding has been allocated totalling $2.4 million, but we realise that even more needs to be done. Over the next five years, the Government will inject a record $53.8 million into the system."

Mrs Aagaard said the NT Government is leading the Caring For Our Children Reform Agenda, adding the Framework for Building a Better Child Protection System is an initial platform for reform.

"It targets the problems we all know exist in the system and has been informed by national and international studies, meetings, consultations and the initial findings of a review of how the system works.

"This review has identified that there has been a 223% increase in the number of notifications of child abuse and neglect, and 171 per cent increase in the number of children in care since 1997/98.

"The NT Child Protection System is not in crisis, but is under a lot of pressure, and the Government wants to ensure the system does not encounter the kind of crisis experienced in other jurisdictions."

Mrs Aagaard said a Reference Group, made up of leading experts from the community, non-government and academic sectors, has been working with Government on the review.

"And I thank the members of the group for their guidance and ongoing role in the reform agenda, and everyone who has participated so far.

"I believe the resources, strategies and initiatives outlined in this Framework will help us achieve a better balance between the needs of today and investing for the future.

"It demonstrates Government’s continuing commitment to building an effective system that responds to needs of vulnerable children and families, and recognises that the necessary reforms will take time and that we cannot make them alone.

"The continuing involvement of children, individuals, families and our community partners will be crucial."
The additional funding will initially allow for the commencement of the reform process by:

- Increasing staff to respond to reports of children in immediate harm
- Building a child protection system to deliver different levels of support to vulnerable families
- Improving support for foster and kinship carers
- Assisting Aboriginal communities to find better ways to protect and care for their children