COMMONWEALTH TURNS A BLIND EYE TO TERRITORY CHILDCARE SHORTAGE

Minister for Family and Community Services, Delia Lawrie, today called on the Commonwealth Government to listen to families that simply cannot get their children into child care in the Territory.

Ms Lawrie said the recent claim by the Commonwealth Government that there were over 1000 childcare place vacancies in the Territory was a slap in the face to Territory families desperately trying to get their children into childcare.

An audit last year of child care waiting lists showed that there are around 2000 families on waiting lists unable to get their children into care.

“Just in Palmerston and Darwin alone there are over 1400 families on waiting lists. Waiting lists are also high in Alice Springs, Tennent Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy” Ms Lawrie said.

“The provision of childcare is clearly a Commonwealth responsibility and claims of 1000 vacancies beggars belief.

“Bronwyn Bishop’s comments this week show that even the Commonwealth Government’s own members realise how out of touch they are on this issue.

“The failure by the Commonwealth to provide sufficient childcare places is devastating for many young Territory families who do not have a lot of family support living here.

“The lack of child care places is a major burden, financially and socially, on Territory families.”

Louise de Bomford from the Mitchell Street Child Care Centre said she was absolutely mortified by the Commonwealth’s claims.

“We have 200 waitlisted and a 12 month wait and I have had people calling this week saying there are 1070 vacancies, this is simply not the case,” Ms de Bomford said.

“The Martin Government is the only jurisdiction in Australia that provides a child care subsidy with over $3 million being spent to directly subsidise the cost of child care,” Ms Lawrie said.

“It is time for the Commonwealth to listen to Territory families and provide additional places for the Territory. Stop treating child care as a business, it is an essential service.”

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