LABOR’S FIGURES DON’T ADD UP

John Elferink MLA
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The assertion by the Chief Minister during Question Time today that his Government’s contribution to the child protection system is over $90million a year is errant nonsense.

“While the Country Liberals acknowledge resources have increased since Labor won Government in 2001 – as they should have given the large increase in the budget through GST revenues – the figure is considerably lower than over $90million for child protection services,” says Shadow Treasurer John Elferink

“The line item in the 2008-09 Health and Families annual report indicates that the total Child Protection services budget in the coming year will be $25.4million, approximately one-third of the $90million alluded too by Paul Henderson.

“Remarkably, given the issues associated with child protection, this was $486,000 less than in the previous financial year.

“The $90million referred to by the Chief Minister is probably a reference to the $98million budgeted for the entire NT Families and Children sector – of which Child Protection Services are just a part.”

Mr Elferink said the Henderson Government had form when it came to talking up its spending on programs.

“It’s important to note mere spending doesn’t always equal good management,” he said.

“In October the former Minister, Malamndirri McCarthy, told Parliament the budget was over $100million, before issuing a media release several days later downing that figure to $69million.

“That $69M covers Out of Home Care, Youth Services and the Child Protection Services portfolio areas.

“The reality is that whatever the Henderson Government is spending on child protection, the agency is still falling well short of community expectation when it comes to protecting Territory children in Government care.

“The Henderson Government has had 5 different Child Protection ministers since winning Government – six if you include Marion Scrymgour’s two stints in the job – and the circumstances surrounding the protection of children have continued to steadily deteriorate.

“The lack of continuity and creative accounting is doing nothing to alleviate the child protection crisis.”

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