MEDIA RELEASE

BACKFLIP UNDER PRESSURE

October 19th, 2011

Shadow Child Protection Minister, Robyn Lambley, said the Territory Government stands condemned for its appalling mishandling of the Ombudsman’s report into the abuse of Territory children in care.

“For reasons known only to Labor, the Government originally rejected almost half of the 28 recommendations contained in ‘A Lifelong Shadow’,” Ms Lambley said.

“Buckling under the intense pressure applied by the Opposition and the community, Minister Kon Vatskalis has done a major back-flip and tonight announced he will implement all 28 recommendations from Carolyn Richards’ report.

“The Government's original decision to reject 40% of the report's recommendations will stand as a damning indictment of Labor’s denial of the systemic issues within the Territory's child protection services.

“This decision now means there will be long-overdue reforms to the Central Intake Service including additional staff and round-the-clock operation.

“It also means the Government will allow Northern Territory public hospital staff to make notifications to the Child Protection Authority by facsimile.

“Royal Darwin Hospital social worker, Susan Mansfield, was victimised and bullied by senior departmental staff because she made a child protection notification by fax and then for speaking out publicly on child protection. She has now been vindicated.

“By accepting all the Ombudsman’s recommendations, the Government will now reinstate a mandatory investigation policy for children brought to the notice of the Department of Children and Families three times in a 12 month period.

“This backflip is great news for children in care and departmental staff. The tragedy is it took intense pressure for the Government to make the change.”

Further comment: Robyn Lambley 0428 040 693