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**CLP ignores experts to put children’s welfare at risk**

Shadow Minister for Children and Families Natasha Fyles says the Government’s decision to merge the Office of Children and Families with the Department of Education and Children’s Services blatantly ignores expert advice and jeopardises the progress already made to rebuild child protection and wellbeing services.

“In 2010, a Board of Inquiry conducted the most extensive review into the child protection system in the Northern Territory’s history and handed down a report; *Growing them strong, together,*” Ms Fyles said.

“Labor acted immediately to implement all 147 recommendations as a result of the Inquiry and established an independent expert panel to oversee the implementation.

“A key recommendation was to establish a stand-alone agency, the Department of Children and Families, to oversee and implement the reforms.

“The CLP’s decision to now merge this agency with the Department of Education ignores expert advice and dilutes the importance of delivering critical services to protect our most needy children.

“This backwards step will dismantle important progress made towards improving child protection and wellbeing services in the Territory.

“Terry Mills and the CLP need to stop ignoring the experts, stop shuffling around public servants and re-naming agencies and get on with the job of ensuring resources deliver better outcomes for our children and families at risk.”

Ms Fyles called on the CLP to commit to the ongoing implementation of the Board of Inquiry’s recommendations and confirm the continuation of the independent Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee, chaired by Professor Graham Vimpani.

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