CHILD ABUSE IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Tackling child abuse has been an important task of the Martin Government since it was elected with more resources for police, child protection and tackling alcohol abuse.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said, sadly, the abuse of children in remote communities is a problem that is going to take considerable time to turn around.

“We have quadrupled the budget for child protection in the Northern Territory from under $8 million to nearly $32 million,” Ms Martin said.

“The Police, Fire and Emergency Services budget has increased by 55% and we’re on track to provide an extra 200 police officers by the end of this year.

“We have also increased funding for domestic violence legal services, introduced specialist sexual assault prosecutors and established a witness assistance service.

“Changes have also been made to the Criminal Code, Sentencing Act and the Evidence Act to provide tougher penalties for people who commit crimes against children.

“One area we don’t have the funds to deal with is the housing backlog in remote communities, which will take $800 million to fix.

“In some communities up to 16 people are crammed into a house – and this has been identified as a contributor to creating unsafe environments for children.

“Treasurer Peter Costello who is in Darwin can make a real difference today by announcing an extra $50 million a year over the next decade to reduce the backlog.

“The Federal Government announced a $10 billion surplus last week – only a fraction of that is needed to address the housing problems in remote areas.

“We’ve worked closely with the Federal Government on tackling child abuse – and this bipartisan approach is essential to continue the fight,” Ms Martin said.

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