



**LIA FINOCCHIARO
DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER**

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For immediate circulation

Child protection crisis reinforced by reports

The Northern Territory's child protection crisis continues. The thorough and in-depth reports by the Children's Commissioner, released last night (Wednesday) in Parliament, reinforce the need for prioritised and swift action, including the appointment of additional front line workers.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Lia Finocchiaro said today that the reports showed ongoing, systemic failings that must be addressed as a priority.

"The Opposition reinforces that the safety of Territory children must be at the centre of all decision making, and that the recommendations outlined in the reports should be implemented as a priority.

"Territory Families currently has no system for prioritising the most at-risk children or for aggregating notifications in order to identify those that are the most in danger. This is evidenced by the 52 notifications concerning the family of the Tennant Creek family that led to no escalation by the department to intervene before disaster struck.

"I call on the government to immediately rectify the current processes concerning prioritisation of cases with multiple notifications that evidence 'cumulative harm', as per the Commissioner's recommendations, so vulnerable children can be identified at the earliest opportunity.

"It is imperative that there is a clear and easily accessible record of notifications and substantiations in relation to a particular child available to case managers.

"Necessary departmental cultural changes and related resourcing must be put in place immediately, including a new IT system, improved interagency connectivity and the removal of information silos.

"Recent questioning from the Opposition to the Minister for Territory Families about Tennant Creek, for example, uncovered that the average caseload per Territory Families staff member located in Tennant Creek (as of 31 December 2017) was 42.6 cases. The most serious cases must be identified and made a priority, with increased attention and resources devoted to protecting the most serious situations.

"The demands of the child protection system across the Northern Territory needs to be met with rigour," said Ms Finocchiaro.

ENDS

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