



GARY HIGGINS OPPOSITION LEADER

Media Release
5 March 2018

For immediate release

Time to open the books

The Opposition is calling on the Gunner government to open its books.

Following the government's interim response to the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* last week, the Leader of the Opposition said it is time for the Northern Territory government to live up to its open and transparent rhetoric.

Leader of the Opposition, Gary Higgins said that the Northern Territory government should disclose whether they will participate in the 'review and audit of Commonwealth expenditure in the Northern Territory in the area of family and children's services,' which formed Recommendation 6.1 of the report by the appointed Commissioners.

The report also stated that *The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Governments need to improve transparency of funding and service delivery for child protection and youth justice related programs significantly.* **The Territory government's response, as provided last week, was "noted for action by others."**

"The recommendation is an integral part of bettering the Territory's child protection and youth justice system, ensuring monies are spent in the most efficient way possible to ensure the safety and protection of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

"I call on the Territory government to assure Territorians that it will participate in the Productivity Commission review and audit of funds, and open its books up to show where taxpayer dollars are being spent.

"I echo recent commentary from Indigenous community organisations around scrutiny and accountability.

"I also call on the government to accept the hand of cooperation Federal Minister Dan Tehan has extended to the Northern Territory government and agree to work together for the benefit of Territorians," said Mr Higgins.

ENDS

Media contact: Georgina Murphy 0432 679 567

FOR NOTING:

Recommendation 6.1 (page 237, Chapter 6):

The Productivity Commission undertake a review and audit of Commonwealth expenditure in the Northern Territory in the area of family and children's services relevant to the prevention of harm to children. The review should address co-ordination of programs, funding agreements and selection of service providers, service outputs and evaluations.

This Recommendation was made by the Royal Commissioners, as appointed in August 2016.

And the Commission also stated (page 236, Chapter 6):

The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Governments need to improve transparency of funding and service delivery for child protection and youth justice related programs significantly.