

May 2026

By email: LSC@nt.gov.au

Submission to the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

I am writing in opposition of the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

The amended Bill proposes to lower the threshold for removing a child from their family. Under the current legislation, a child can be removed if there is an 'unacceptable' risk to the child. The Bill has been amended to allow for the removal of a child when there is a 'likely' risk. Further, the Department has powers to investigate when a child 'might' be at risk.

I am concerned because the amended Bill is going to lead to the Northern Territory Government removing more children from their families. Further, the amended Bill will prioritise "permanency" over the needs of the individual child. This will lead to less children being reunified with their parents due to the rigid time limits. This law was recently appealed in Victoria with clear evidence it did not provide enough flexibility for the courts to make a decision that was best for the child.

Many issues driving child protection involvement are closely linked to poverty, housing stress, service shortages and intergenerational disadvantage. To ensure child safety is the priority, the Northern Territory Government must instead facilitate family access to housing, rehabilitation, counselling, and early intervention services. This is what is needed to care for children. The Northern Territory Government is spending a record amount on policing and prisons. Further spending on punitive measures as opposed to essential services is not an effective measure for child safety.

The Northern Territory government must respond to the growing public pressure and expert scrutiny and drop the Bill. I would also like to note that this Bill has not had any expert consultation, public scrutiny (via a public inquiry), or cost analysis released. The Government is under pressure from community, experts, legal centres to drop the amended Bill.

Lastly, I would also like to highlight the unreasonable timeframes for public submissions into the amended Bill. This has made public engagement difficult on what is a significant proposed change in the Northern Territory.

Regards,

Ellie Lukin