

**MEDIA RELEASE – GERRY WOOD CHAIR NT COUNCIL OF TERRITORY CO-OPERATION**

The Council of Territory Co-operation (CTC) finished the two days of public hearings yesterday afternoon. Gerry Wood said today “at our Public Hearing CTC looked into the NT Government’s response to the *Growing them strong, together Report* and the hearings proved very productive.

Dr Bath, the NT Children’s Commissioner, appeared again before the CTC and under questioning by the CTC members said there were a number of matters which the Board of Inquiry had brought to its attention just as it was concluding its work which he would like the opportunity to pursue further. These matters included consideration of issues surrounding adoption and residential care facilities.

Gerry Wood made it clear “that the CTC will be recommending to Chief Minister that the NT Children’s Commissioner have self-referencing powers to investigate matters relating to any child’s wellbeing. Presently he is not able to do this. “

Gerry Wood said “Dr Bath indicated that in some other jurisdictions in Australia Children’s Commissioners, or equivalent office holders, have this degree of independence. The CTC strongly believes this should be the case for the NT children’s commissioner and this is what CTC will be putting to the Chief Minister.

Gerry will also be asking the Chief Minister to clarify the NT Children’s Commissioner’s role in the monitoring of the response to the *Growing them strong, together Report* recommendations.

CTC also decided to pursue with NT Government and Commonwealth Government the suggestion made by John Paterson AMSANT’s Chief Executive Officer the idea that one or two of the new houses being built in SIHIP communities be set aside for Indigenous foster carers. .

Mr Wood said it was pleasing to see so many members of the public attending the CTC Public Hearings.

ENDS

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