

Submission to the NT Legislative Scrutiny Committee

Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026

Dear Members,

My sincere thanks for the opportunity to make this brief submission. Having worked professionally with the industry for a period exceeding 40 years both in NSW and the NT, I understand it is a very complex and important piece of legislation needing to be adequately scrutinised to ensure that the rights of children are protected as a priority.

My biggest issue is with 'the system'. Globally, it is a difficult area to adequately get right. Whilst there appears to be no 'magic bullet' solutions, there are programs internationally (e.g. Scandinavian countries) where approaches to child protection and care best benefit families and individuals to enhance overall community well-being.

As a recommendation, I would urge the Committee to investigate those processes with the view to incorporate them into your proposed legislation. Take your time to make sure you get it right. Our current bureaucratic model does not serve the best interests of the people most impacted. My understanding is that your Committee has only one Aboriginal representative (Dheran Young MLA). His views on the cultural influences at play here need to be carefully considered. The 'system' needs to reflect the intercultural nature of the processes and not simply viewed through a privileged, white lens.

Given the nature of the issues here in the NT are mostly to do with an Aboriginal cohort, that must be recognised and considered. I have worked alongside the NT Department of Children and Families (through a variety of iterations) for over 30 years. The 'silo' reality is evident not only with inter-department constructs but also within the Department itself. There have been cases I've been involved with where staff don't communicate across the agency. I was requested to furnish a report on one particular young person who had six different case workers, none of whom communicated the contents of the report with each other. Little wonder 'falling through the gaps' is such a common issue within the Department.

I wish the Committee well in its deliberations and look forward to successful outcomes that drastically improve the service deliveries of the agency.

Sincerely,

Phil Walcott

M.A. B. Soc. Sc. Dip. Teach. J.P.

Counselling Psychologist (Retired)

Alice Springs N.T.