

**From:** [Antony Sinni](#)  
**To:** [Legislative Scrutiny Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026  
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Dear Scrutiny Committee,

I write to express my deep concern and opposition to the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill (**the Bill**) as a resident of Darwin and the Northern Territory.

The Bill makes major changes to child protection law in the Northern Territory and in doing so, will make the system worse, not better. There is no evidentiary basis that justifies the sweeping reforms that the Bill proposes. In fact, the Bill goes against years of recommendations from Royal Commissions, Inquiries and Coronial Inquests. This Bill will move the Northern Territory backwards and does nothing to actually protect children, particularly First Nations children. By the contrary, the Bill removes protections for Aboriginal children to be placed with their family, culture and language, makes it easier to remove children from their families in circumstances where the actual risk to the child is not the fault of the family (i.e. overcrowded housing), makes reunification harder, and gives the DCF unprecedented powers to intervene in the lives of families in the Territory.

My Concerns are as follows:

1. The Bill will make it easier for DCF to remove children from their families by lowering the threshold of removal to “significant and likely and likely risk of harm” (Bill s 12A(3)). However, this fails to address the root causes of harm for children in the NT including a lack of safe Housing, domestic and family violence, and a lack of culturally appropriate support services.
2. The Bill removes the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (Care and Protection Act s 12) and replaces it with the universal child Placement Principle. It will mean Aboriginal children will lose the right to be brought up with their own family, culture and country. I am deeply concerned that removal of this protection will replicate the harm and trauma that was experienced by children of the stolen generation. If passed, the Northern Territory will be the first jurisdiction to remove the Aboriginal Child Placement principle. This is an absolutely shameful legacy.

3. The Bill introduces proactive efforts (Bill s 12) however, the non-binding nature of the principle does not create any real consequence if DCF fails to make proactive efforts.
4. The Bill introduces family responsibility agreements (Bill Part 2.1A ss 65A-65F) and orders (Bill ss 102A-102T) with a view to make parents more accountable, improve parenting capacity and address parents' needs through engagement with support services, counselling and programs. However, the NTG 2026-2027 did not provide any funding or resourcing to address the major service gaps and resourcing constraints of services that would encompass a parents FRO or FRA. It is a gross irony that the DCF is forcing parents to attend services but provides no support to those services to actually assist those parents. I am worried that these provisions will set parents up to fail and be used as a reason to justify removal.
5. The Bill allows a carer an automatic party to legal proceedings if the child has been living with that carer for more than 8 months. As a Territorian, I am deeply concerned at the notion that under this bill, a person who has known my child for 8 months will automatically be party to a court proceeding about my child and be given the same the same rights in court processes as me as the parent of the child and also have access to all the records and information before the court.

There is plenty of work to be done to protect children, particularly Aboriginal children, in the Northern Territory. All the risks that the CLP government purport to address with this Bill could be done under the current Bill however, there is a notable absence in this Bill about the governments role in adequately funding the services and sectors that will keep children safe in the Northern Territory. The Government should listen to the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal leaders about what Aboriginal children need.

If the government wanted to keep children safe, it would not pass this pass Bill. I strongly oppose and ask the government to withdraw this Bill.

Kind regards,

Antony Sinni

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