



MEDIA RELEASE

Own Initiative Investigation

A Children's Commissioner's Own Initiative Investigation Report has been tabled in the Northern Territory Parliament.

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Hon Natasha Fyles, tabled the reports in the Legislative Assembly Sittings on 24 June 2020.

On 19 September 2019, the Children's Commissioner commenced an Own Initiative Investigation in accordance with section 28(2) of the *Children's Commissioner Act 2013*. The investigation examined services provided to 12 children who were in the care of the Chief Executive Officer of NT Families and Children, Department of Children and Families and more recently Territory Families and placed with carers TFC1 and TFC2. The investigation examined all interactions and interventions by Territory Families, Department of Health, Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Life Without Barriers.

There are 14 recommendations from this investigation pertaining to the relevant service providers.

The investigation found shortcomings and policy breaches in relation to appropriate assessment and provision of expected standards of care. Many opportunities were missed by service providers in responding to standard of care reports resulting in continued physical and emotional harm of the children in care.

Quotes from the Children's Commissioner Colleen Gwynne:

"Our investigation into this case revealed a 16-year history of systematic failures to adequately review the suitability of the carers, conduct quality standard of care checks and thoroughly examine allegations of child abuse within the out of home care setting".

"These findings show that there is still a lack of rigorous oversight, coordination and accountability in order to produce quality safety assessments and out of home care placements for vulnerable children and young people".

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