

Thursday 23 July 2009

VIC COALITION WOULD STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Victoria's child protection system has failed to protect some of our most vulnerable children yet John Brumby will not take the necessary action to fix the system.

John Brumby admitted last week that the child protection system had failed, yet his Government's only response is to initiate yet another secret internal review.

These 'internal' reviews are typical of a government that covers up instead of acting openly and honestly in the interests of all Victorians.

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition in government would act to strengthen Child Protection by appointing an independent Children's Commissioner who could investigate and make recommendations to protect vulnerable Victorian children without waiting for direction from government.

Five out of eight states and territories have an independent Children's Commissioner and the need for this position in Victoria has never been greater or more urgent.

The Children's Commissioner would be able to:

- initiate reviews regarding children who have been abused or neglected,
- not leave it to the whim of the minister;
- advocate for more effective protection of children and identify ways in which it can be achieved; and
- report directly to the Parliament, not to the Minister.

Any responsible government should not be afraid of independent scrutiny.

This announcement today follows the Coalition's call in recent days for a full judicial review of Victoria's child protection system.

This review should be comprehensive and include:

- why so many kids are being abused;
- how we can improve reporting and investigation;

Policy

- how we can make sure we have child protection workers to keep kids safe;
- whether our courts are acting in the best interests of vulnerable Victorian children; and
- the quality and appropriateness of out of home care. |

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition in Parliament next week will also move an amendment to the *Children Legislation Amendment Bill 2009* to extend the timeframe to review deaths of children known to Victorian child protection agencies from three months to two years.

Victoria currently has Australia's narrowest approach to the review of child deaths, so we must review more cases and increase scrutiny and knowledge of child deaths to ensure Victoria's child protection system is fulfilling its responsibility to protect vulnerable children.