

## WHAT IS THE YOUTH JUSTICE ACT?

The *Youth Justice Act* is a piece of Northern Territory legislation that directs how Government will deal with issues of youth justice or when young people become involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour. The law commenced on 1 August 2006.

### What were the recent changes to the *Youth Justice Act*?

On 1 July 2008, some changes were made to the *Youth Justice Act*:

- the *Youth Justice Act* used to be the responsibility of the Minister for Justice, but on 1 July 2008, the responsibility changed over to the Minister for Children and Families and the Department of Health and Families.
- a new part, called Part 6A, was added to the legislation.

### What is Part 6A?

Part 6A of the *Youth Justice Act* is titled "Responsible Care and Supervision within the family". This Part allows certain Government departments to enter into Family Responsibility Agreements and Family Responsibility Orders with families who are struggling with their child's behaviour.

Family Responsibility Agreements and Orders can be made with families whose children are displaying behavioural problems and it appears that the family circumstances may have contributed to that behaviour.

Part 6A of the *Youth Justice Act* provides some guiding principles for Government when working with families and young people who may be considered for an Agreement or Order:

- the best interests of the youth are to be treated as the paramount consideration; and
- government agencies with responsibilities related to the welfare of a youth must work together cooperatively and effectively to help parents:
  - safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the youth;
  - exercise appropriate control over the behaviour of the youth; and
  - comply with any relevant Family Responsibility Agreement or Order.

### Why was Part 6A introduced?

By including Part 6A in the *Youth Justice Act*, the Northern Territory Government can provide support to families and parents, while ensuring that parents are doing the best they can for their children.

*For more information on Family Responsibility Agreement and Order, see fact sheets 3 and 4.*