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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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Shadow Attorney General

Shadow Minister for Corrections

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**LABOR’S FOI CHANGES TO END NAPTHINE’S SECRET STATE**

An Andrews Labor Government will overhaul Freedom of Information laws and declare an end to Denis Napthine’s secret state.

Labor’s changes will make it quicker and easier for Victorians to access the vital information that Denis Napthine is keeping hidden.

Denis Napthine and the Liberal Government broke their promise to be open and accountable, establishing the most secretive regime in Victoria’s history.

The Liberals have repeatedly denied requests for access to Ambulance Victoria and Country Fire Authority response times, and refused to release police statistics and a damning report from the Child Safety Commissioner.

As part of the overhaul, Labor will convert the role of the FOI Commissioner into the Office of the Public Access Counsellor (OPAC).

The new, independent Office will maintain all existing powers of the FOI Commissioner, and will gain the authority to review those FOI decisions made by Departments and Ministers and made on the grounds of Cabinet-in-Confidence.

OPAC will also gain the power to set standards for Departmental officers (which are currently set by the Attorney General) and reduce the time limit for responding to FOI requests from 45 days to 30 days.

The time limit for an agency to consider the OPAC’s decision will also be reduced, from 60 to 14 days.

**Quotes attributable to Mr Pakula:**

*“When Denis Napthine hid damning information about the ambulance crisis, he put every Victorian at risk.”*

*“Labor will end this secret state and open our doors to the public, because we all deserve to know the details that affect our lives.”*

*“Under Labor’s changes, no future government will ever be able to keep a crisis secret. No more hiding, no more excuses.”*

*"The Public Access Counsellor will have a broader mandate to help Victorians understand how to access Government information."*

**Key Fact**

* Government data shows that a majority of FOI requests to the offices of Napthine Government Ministers have been denied, either in part or in full. Just 15 per cent of requests were granted in full.