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MEDIA RELEASE

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ANTI GANG LEGISLATION IS NOT ANTI YOUTH

Independent MLC Ann Bressington is urging the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia not to “jump to conclusions” over Anti Gang Legislation.

The Hon Ann Bressington says YACSA has obviously misunderstood the intention of the Bill introduced in Parliament on Wednesday 30th May.

“I cannot believe that a youth focused organization would support or excuse “youth gangs” to continue to terrorize average citizens,” Ms Bressington said.

“Obviously YACSA has seen the word ‘curfew’ and assumed that this legislation is part of a former debate regarding a Mayoral Committee to set up curfews in troubled areas. What would be really bizarre is if they have not misunderstood and they support the reign of terror of these groups, but I think that is highly unlikely.”

Ms Bressington has introduced legislation that will increase the powers of police to deal with “known gang members”, apply for curfew orders for troublesome youth and also use anti social behavioural orders as well as parental responsibility orders.

In response to Ms Jennifer Duncan, Executive Director of YACSA, Ms Bressington said “I am sure YACSA did not intend to make light of the fear of residents in some areas. Whilst it is a good voice for its target population, YACSA needs to understand that the activities of gangs simply cannot be ignored any longer”.

Ms Bressington was curious about the comment by YACSA “that youth are the most socially-controlled population”.

“Youth of today have rights and freedoms that could be seen to override the rights of everyday citizens, Ms Bressington said.

“Schoolies Week is an example. Residents of Victor Harbor literally baton down for that event.”

Ms Bressington is concerned that the word “curfew” strikes such panic for YACSA. “Lets target the word “gang” and then we won’t have any need for curfews,” Ann said.

“This particular legislation and the implementation of curfews are not intended to discriminate on the basis of age, but on the anti social behaviour of a minority of youth causing major problems for the rest of the community.