



**Hon Ann Bressington MLC**

Parliament House  
North Terrace  
ADELAIDE SA 5000  
Phone: 08 8237 9541  
Fax: 08 8237 9534

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday, 17 August 2007

# **WHEN DOES FAMILY LAW GET A “RADICAL OVERHAUL” TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM FAMILY BREAKDOWN?**

Independent MLC Ann Bressington is calling on the Federal Government to take action to protect children from being caught in the middle of divorce and separation disputes.

Ms Bressington said these children deserve the care and protection of the government just as much as the indigenous children in the Northern Territory.

She praised the work of the Richard Hillman Foundation, which has lobbied for years for 3 basic changes to family law:

1. Zero tolerance of false allegations.
2. Rebuttable and negotiable equal time, shared parenting.
3. Abolishing existing case law in family law matters.

“We have families that are being torn apart through an adversarial system that encourages separated parents to literally go for the jugular in order to win custody of their children,” Ms Bressington said.

“No matter what changes are made to the process of mediation many parents will be tempted to make false allegations in order to secure full custody of their children.”

“Many fathers are being wrongly accused of sexual abuse or domestic violence and mothers are often having to hand children over to abusive fathers. One mother has spent 2 x30 day stints in jail because she refused to hand over her child on advice from police. The magistrate claimed that she was in breach of a court order even though the young child disclosed that daddy was touching her. I have also seen fathers who have lived with the devastation and stigma of being accused of sexual abuse who have tried to fight the system for years.”

“We have seen that the Federal government is capable of radical intervention where indigenous communities are concerned, and rightly so. Still apparently over 1000 men commit suicide every year because of the unfair and unjust family law that we have in this country. This is another problem that has been ignored by the very government that claims ‘it is all about the welfare of children.’

“The family court is a win/lose situation and even with mediation having to be undertaken before any matter can appear before the court this will not stop the false allegations made against men or the fact that mothers will be forced to hand their children over to unfit fathers. Unless the Federal government changes the law the needs of families will be left wanting. As sad as it is the needs of indigenous communities cannot take precedence over other marginalized and desperate groups in our community.”

**TAKE ACTION AND PROVE YOUR CONCERN FOR THE WELL-  
BEING OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN IS NOT AN ELECTION  
STUNT MR. HOWARD!**