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ECSTASY USE IS NO PARTY

Independent MLC Ann Bressington said today she was unsurprised by the results of a *Daily Telegraph* online poll that revealed a clear majority of readers believe the image of ecstasy as a ‘party’ or ‘recreational’ drug increases its popularity.

A poll on the site today shows about 70 per cent of the more than 2500 respondents believed labels such as “party” and “recreational” drugs make people more likely to use them.

“There is nothing new here. The current climate of criticism and recognition that ‘party’ or ‘recreational’ drugs makes their use seem fun, not dangerous, merely reflects the argument I have been campaigning on for the past eleven years,” Ann said.

“In this debate, people in authority have irresponsibly given the impression that it is cool, safe and acceptable to use ecstasy, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

“We have a culture of acceptability in Australia, which is the result of a misguided drug policy. The mistakes we are making are the direct reason we have the highest rate of drug use in the western world. It is a serious problem that is only getting worse and our decision-makers should be held accountable.”

Ann said it was unfortunate that it had taken high profile incidents this week for the mainstream media, politicians and social commentators to realise the gravity of the situation and seriously condemn the drug-taking culture in Australia.

“This issue is about so much more than an individual footballer. It has been focused on him because of his high profile as an elite athlete, but he is merely a microcosm of a deeply entrenched drug taking culture in Australia. There are thousands of other drug users in Australia whose bad choices may also cost them their jobs, livelihoods, and interpersonal relationships.

“More and more Australians are beginning to realise that they have been misled into underestimating the deleterious consequences of illicit drugs such as ecstasy, but we cannot let the initiative waver. The momentum of this debate must be maintained so that, for the sake of our children and their future, we can begin the process of genuine reform.”