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MEDIA RELEASE

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INDEPENDENT MLC CALLS FOR INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY FUNDING

Independent MLC Ann Bressington will move a Motion that a green paper be commissioned by the State Government for the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability (SACID) to closely scrutinise disability funding.

Ms Bressington is proposing an inquiry into the following questions:

- (a) How many individuals with disabilities are currently registered in SA for funding of services?
- (b) How many individuals are currently on waiting lists to access services and supports?
- (c) How many people are being accepted within a reasonable timeframe, and what would that be?
- (d) How do the services and supports currently provided compare with satisfaction levels of those services and supports?
- (e) How does the South Australian disability services compare with other overseas models, including the US, UK and NZ?
- (f) How do the costs to government of current systems compare with direct payments currently implemented in US, UK and NZ?
- (g) What are the main objections of service providers to having a more personal, flexible and independent, self-managed arrangement?
- (h) What is the main criteria for individuals to not be accepted to receive services and support (the unmet needs document)?
- (i) How are the six priorities for assessment met and how effective has that proven to be?
- (j) How is money allocated to the Office of Disability and Client Services and Disability SA and how does that impact on the disability sector?

Ms Bressington said there was a definite link between the financial strain involved in caring and depression, and that urgent action was required to address an epidemic of severely depressed carers. She is deeply concerned with a new report released by Carers Australia this week that reveals more than a third of Australia's 2.6 million carers who look after people with a disability, mental illness or chronic condition are severely depressed.

"The striking reality is that even though we are constantly told that things have never been better for our quality of life in Australia, we have nearly one million carers who are severely depressed, and they have the lowest sense of well-being of any group ever recorded," Ms Bressington said.

Ms Bressington said the magnitude of these findings was the clear result of an underperforming disability sector.

“Many constituents have contacted me to express their concerns about being unable to pay their household expenses and the strain this has on their wellbeing,” Ms Bressington said.

“It really is a double jeopardy for these people because often their earning capacity is affected by the time it takes to look after their loved ones, and at the same time they have to spend a lot more money on medical expenses than the average person.

“I am hoping that the findings of this inquiry can be used to develop policies that will ease the pain of our overburdened carers, and reverse these incredibly sad and disturbing findings.”