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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **FATHER'S RIGHT TO PROTECT HIS CHILD** **UNDERMINED**

## **An Adelaide father claims that he has been bullied and intimidated into returning his child to suspected abuse.**

“Mr. M” has reported to Independent MLC Ann Bressington that he was threatened and bullied by a social worker if he refused to return his daughter to face further abuse.

“My daughter came to me on access with blood stains on her underpants. I took her to the local hospital and she was examined. She had abrasions and a cut at the opening of her vagina and the medical report produced a primary report of a **child at risk**”, says Mr. M.

When “Mr. M” refused to return the child at the arranged handover he was contacted by a social worker who told him that he would be in trouble if he did not return the children, even though Mr. M reported that he had been told things by his children that were disturbing and that the child has been diagnosed as a “child at risk” by a medical officer.

“It gets worse” said Ms Bressington. “Not only did the social worker ignore the report, but the Child Protection Unit at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital failed to report the incident to the police. If this wasn’t such a serious matter one would think this was a sick comedy of errors. The father was not supported to protect his child and those professionals who are mandatory reporters ignored the evidence and the concerns of the father.”

Three men commit suicide every day in Australia because of court decisions to separate them from their children.

“At the core of this issue is a gender bias against men that is in many cases as obvious as the nose on your face” said Ms Bressington.

“When an accusation is made against a father for sexual abuse everyone swings into action and those children are often removed immediately, even before a medical examination. Yet when a father reports his concerns and the child has unusual injuries that resemble female circumcision he is ignored”.

Female genital mutilation was outlawed in Australia 10 years ago in the Criminal Law Consolidation Act in South Australia. It is a criminal offence. “The Child Protection Act 1993” states that “reasonable suspicion” is all that is required for the removal of a child.

**For more information call Ann Bressington directly on 044 888 7277**