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MEDIA RELEASE

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SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN! **FATHER'S RIGHT TO PROTECT HIS CHILD FURTHER UNDERMINED**

The father who reported the alleged attempted circumcision of his four-year-old daughter by her mother has today been ordered to hand his daughter and son back to the mother because the cause of the injury is undetermined.

Independent MLC Ann Bressington has met with both the father and grandmother today and has heard their unbelievable story of yet another case of child protection gone very wrong.

"I challenge both the mother and father to take a polygraph test about this incident so that the results can be made known publicly and the Child Protection Unit and the Police can be held accountable for their lack of procedure and their lack of investigation into this matter," Ann said.

The grandmother signed an affidavit stating that "I told me that her mother did it with a knife". The five-year-old brother of the little girl told a psychologist with the Child Protection Unit at the Women's and Children's Hospital that "mummy did it with a knife" and that was dismissed as "just something that kids say".

When the child was presented to the Lyall McEwin Hospital some 10 weeks ago she had an unusual wound at the entry of her vagina and was bleeding. The doctor diagnosed the child as "at risk" and referred the father immediately to the WCH Child Protection Unit.

"The father says that the children are so fearful of going back to the mother that they become near hysterical when driving in the vicinity of her residence and now the court has ordered they be returned to her by 5pm this afternoon," Ann said.

"Who will take responsibility if this little girl becomes the next 'angel of the lake' or the next Danielle Valerio? If there is any doubt at all about the safety of these children then the court must be obliged to provide the protection that it is set up to do."

Ann expressed deep concern that the police investigation had not taken the bloodstained underwear of the little girl provided by the father for evidence and had not interviewed the mother in person five weeks after the incident. The Police did say, however, that "the mother was asked (via telephone) if she did it and she said no".

Today Families SA recommended that the father undergo psychological evaluation because he made a request to have interviews recorded after there was disagreement on comments made by a senior police officer relating to this abuse and other incidents that it was "a cultural issue".

“We see situations like this often where all of a sudden a father is turned into the villain and his credibility and standing is destroyed because he dared to challenge the actions of authorities. This culture must change if our children are to be protected,” Ann said.