

MEDIA RELEASE

ANN BRESSINGTON
INDEPENDENT DRUG REFORM MLC

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INQUIRY PUSH INTO 'DYSFUNCTIONAL' FAMILIES SA

- Disturbing claims over the practices of a key State Government agency.
- Concerns that children being put at risk directly as a result of decisions made by Families SA.
- Move to set up Parliamentary Inquiry this week.

State Parliament will hear this week of a number of disturbing claims over the workings of a key State Government agency – Families SA, and how decisions made by it have needlessly disrupted children's lives and put them at risk.

The cases that will be raised in Parliament are part of a push by Independent Drug Reform MLC Ann Bressington to have a Parliamentary Select Committee established into the practices of Families SA, following numerous complaints she has received.

The Motion for the Inquiry will be seconded by No Pokies MLC Nick Xenophon, who has also received a number of complaints over Families SA's protocols, especially in dealing with teenagers with drug problems.

Ann Bressington was prompted to move for the Inquiry after receiving many calls for help over decisions made by Families SA. In particular one case that she was confronted with ***"left me with no choice but to take action."***

The case in question involves two very young children, a brother and sister (both under 7) who were removed from their parents by Families SA on the basis of an unsubstantiated claim that the parents were heroin users. The children are now in the care of another family member, claims have been made that one of the children has been abused by an associate of this family member.

Investigations by Ann Bressington have revealed that no medical examinations occurred to substantiate that the parents were drug users, despite both parents being willing to submit to random drug tests to prove they were not.

Ann Bressington said:

"This case is just the tip of the iceberg of the many stories of seemingly bizarre decisions by Families SA that don't make sense for the welfare of the children involved. I've had over 20 cases brought to my attention where the decisions made by Families SA do not appear to be in the best interests of the children concerned."

Nick Xenophon said he would be supporting the inquiry after receiving a number of similar calls, including *"one case that stood out involving a family whose 16 year old son who*

developed a drug problem, and who also had (totally out of character) committed serious offences. The son no longer lives with his parents, and their pleas to Families SA for the son to get treatment and help for his drug problem appear to have been ignored.”

Ms Bressington and Mr Xenophon have also pleaded for members of the public to come forward with their stories involving Families SA, to assist the case for an Inquiry, and if established to give evidence at it.

Nick Xenophon on 0411 626 677.