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MEDIA RELEASE

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CANNABIS – NO LONGER A MINOR OFFENCE

TOUGH NEW LEGISLATION FOR THE CULTIVATION OF CANNABIS WAS PASSED IN THE UPPER HOUSE LAST NIGHT AND MARKS THE BEGINNING OF SWEEPING NEW DRUG LAWS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Family First MLC Dennis Hood introduced legislation to remove the expiation system for cannabis and have a fine of \$1000 replace the expiation fee of \$300 for growing one cannabis plant which came into effect on 3rd December, 2006.

Independent MLC Ann Bressington put forward amendments to further increase the penalty to \$5000 for one plant or a two year prison sentence. The Bill was passed with support from the Liberal Party and No Pokies MP Nick Xenophon.

“The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported in September 2006 that the successful drug policy of Sweden was significantly due to the fact that police targeted both cannabis and amphetamine type drugs at a street level,” Ms Bressington said.

“No matter how you look at it legislation has not supported police to do their job and enforce the law. This has been a major flaw in our attempts to curb cannabis production and sale. Now perhaps those who grow and sell marijuana will see that the penalty of production and distribution of cannabis is a serious offence and penalties will reflect just that”.

The Bill will now progress to the Lower House for the Government to either accept or reject. Cannabis laws in South Australia have changed gradually over the past few years from 10 plants incurring an expiation fee of \$150 to 3 plants and now a serious fine or imprisonment.

“Given the serious health and mental health consequences now linked with marijuana, the increased potency and of course the availability of the drug it was time for serious change. I applaud Mr. Hood for putting the original Bill forward and I am also pleased to see that the Liberal Party has made the decision to come to the party as well. This could mark a significant wave of change in this state where drug legislation is concerned,” Ms Bressington said.