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MEDIA RELEASE

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STOP TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES

The Hon Ann Bressington MLC today is pleading with authorities to stop “tinkering around the edges” of what are clearly drug-related problems and which need to be managed and treated as such.

“In two consecutive days, we’ve had Pam Simmons, Guardian of Children and Young People, and Mr John Darley, Public Advocate, raise alarm over the impact of drug-addicted behaviours on our children and elderly populations. In fact, this is our most precious and vulnerable community,” Ms Bressington said.

“Anyone who works with addicts knows that, ultimately, it is their families that are the real victims. It is tragic that our government has yet to recognise this group of people as victims who, on a daily basis, have to cope with outrageous behaviours, often over which they may have little control; from theft and property damage to deceitful and even fraudulent behaviour.

“I am concerned that, if we are not careful about a clear “zero tolerance” of drugs policy, we will merely realign government and legal policy frameworks to accommodate drug-related behaviours to suit the addict, rather than create systems for ensuring the social responsibility of the addict.

“One has to wonder how many increasingly violent crimes (e.g. home invasions) are now being attributed to “psychotic” behaviours of mentally ill persons rather than drug-related behaviours. We already know the mental health system is overstretched, but it would not be hard to show that a significant proportion of drug abusers are now being treated as mental health consumers.

“If people steal, we ask the victim to conceal their finances. If a child is abused, we teach them to flee to a safe place. If a woman’s drink is spiked, we teach her not to turn her back. But none of these will stop the abuses or the abusers and all of these additional support services will require further resources to navigate around the root problem.”

Ms Bressington is asking the Guardian and Public Advocate not to seek the establishment of alternative infrastructures aimed at dealing with the criminal, destructive and anti-social behaviours of drug addicts, but urges better inter-departmental co-operation to deliver proper drug rehabilitation and treatment programs for drug abusers and their families, at a primary health care level.

“Addicts display behaviour patterns that exaggerate anti-social and dysfunctional lifestyles. When a government is able to identify the negative impact of the set patterns and support recovery-based programs to change behaviour, **starting with assisting people to stop using drugs**, then we will see less of an impact on vulnerable sectors of the community. **This is a must.**”

RECOVERED ADDICTS SAY:

“THE ONLY WAY TO RECOVER FROM DRUGS IS TO STOP USING THEM.”