



Hon Dennis Hood MLC
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Family First Party

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30 June 2006

Dear Members and Friends,

Hello everyone. As I have now been elected to the South Australian Parliament for just over three months I thought it timely to write to you and update you on Family First's progress over this period. During this time we have dealt with a large number of issues and have certainly had our share of success as well. Below you will find an outline of some of the main issues that have attracted our attention over the last few months.

- High Stamp Duty Charges on Private Homes
- Skycity casino
- Courts and sentencing
- Amphetamine use
- Drug penalties
- Cannabis

Cannabis

In the fight against drugs I have targeted the growing of cannabis in our community. To this end, I have put forward a Bill amending the Criminal Law Consolidation Act. Currently, those people growing one cannabis plant receive an expiation notice of \$150, which does not show in their record. This is despite the plant having a street value close to \$2,000. This Bill proposes to remove the growing of one Cannabis plant from the expiation system to force offenders to face the legal system as they will be required to appear in court for their offence. The courts will then identify repeat offenders (which are not possible under the expiation system) and will facilitate sentences which serve as a deterrent as well as allowing appropriate rehabilitation for those with drug addiction. Family First will continue to monitor drug use and alternative drug law enforcement methods as it is clear that the current system is just not working.

I have found some support from both sides of Parliament but I am in need of your help to lobby the Government to ensure full support for the Bill. Please write to the Government indicating your support for the Bill called the *Controlled Substances (Expiation of Simple Cannabis Offence) Amendment Bill*.

You can write to:

Hon Gail Gago MLC

Minister for Substance Abuse

15th Floor, State Administration Centre

200 Victoria Square

Adelaide SA 5000

or email her at minister.gago@saugov.sa.gov.au

People who use cannabis are:

1. Four times more likely to report symptoms of depression.
2. In a lifetime, of people who use it 3-10 times, 20% go on to use other illicit drugs.
3. People who use it 100 or more times, 75% go on to use other illicit drugs.”
4. Six times more likely to develop schizophrenia than non-users.
5. Babies born to mothers who use marijuana during pregnancy have 11 times the risk of getting childhood leukemia.
6. The American Psychiatric Association lists the harmful effects of marijuana as psychotic disorders, hallucinations, anxiety disorders, impaired judgment, delusions and aggressive behavior.
7. There is four times more cancer causing tar in marijuana than in tobacco smoke.

As you can see cannabis is a very harmful substance and the bill that I have introduced to the Parliament will ensure that its level of availability in the community is reduced.

I would also like to add that I was shocked when the Hon Sandra Kanck MLC, (Australian Democrats), made comments in the Legislative Council about ecstasy not being a dangerous drug. Quite frankly I find it an outrageous comment. I am disappointed that a Member of Parliament would view this drug with such flippancy.

You may rest assured that Family First will never support the legalisation of any drug that is harmful to the people of South Australia. This includes ecstasy, heroin, cannabis and other amphetamines that harm our young people. We must act to reduce the illicit drug supply – not increase it.

During my first three months in Parliament I have given speeches on many subjects including:

- River Torrens Linear Park Bill
- Controlled Substances – Expiation of Simple Cannabis Offences
- Criminal Law Consolidation (Dangerous Driving) Amendment Bill
- Criminal Law Consolidation (Throwing Objects at Moving Vehicles) Amendment Bill
- Baptist Community Services in South Australia
- Statutes Amendment (New Rules of Civil Procedure) Bill
- Statutes Amendment (Road Transport Compliance and Enforcement) Bill
- Tobacco Produces Regulation (Prohibited Tobacco Products) Amendment Bill

The fight has just begun!!

Big Brother Update – Some Good News

As you are aware, Family First made complaints about the Big Brother Uncut Program in 2005. These complaints included episodes where some scenes were demeaning to women and some “housemates” were sexually harassing women. After several letters written to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and Channel 10, a reply from the Chief Executive Officer of Channel 10 was received. It stated,

“We accept ACMA’s decision that episodes of *Big Brother Uncut* 2005 contained sexually demeaning references to women, and that this was a significant factor in ACMA’s breach finding. We are determined not to repeat this mistake in 2006.”

From my assessment of the program in 2006, it is not much better and I am pleased to hear that it has been axed from Channel 10’s line of programs. It was Family First who called for its axing 15 months ago and we are pleased to see that it has been dropped after some considerable pressure.

I would like to add that I continue to show disgust at such television programs. Our young people are being exposed to such lewd behaviour and may be adopting this behaviour assuming that it is normal and natural. The fight against these sorts of programs is not over but we have made some ground. Thank you for joining Andrew Evans and myself in this effort.

Maiden Speech

As is the custom for all new Members of Parliament, I was given the opportunity to give my maiden speech in Parliament on 3rd May 2006. In it I spoke from the heart on some of the most important issues facing our society today. Listed below are some quotes taken directly from my maiden speech:

1. Increasing illicit drug use

"In view of these very serious consequences of marijuana use, an appropriate change to the law, which significantly reduces availability, must be made as soon as possible. I will introduce a bill to this council to this effect in the coming weeks."

2. Lack of individual responsibility

"As I have outlined, the very fabric of our society has seen significant change over the past few generations, some of which has had a negative impact. Perhaps the most significant has been the steady decline in our willingness as a society to apportion individuals' responsibility and appropriate accountability for their actions. We have become a society that encourages mediocrity, even from a child's early school years where teachers are encouraged not to fail struggling individual students and where difficult individual circumstances are seen to partly justify wrongdoing in some cases."

3. Criminal sentences which do not reflect community standards

"During a recent conversation with a former justice of the South Australian Supreme Court I asked whether in his opinion sentences for crime in general were about right, too lenient or too harsh. His answer was immediate and decisive: far too lenient. When questioned about what could be done, his response was, 'Nothing, because any decent sentences are almost always overturned on appeal."

This situation simply cannot continue. If the judiciary will not act to rectify this, legislation must be introduced to create minimum sentence levels to ensure appropriate consistency in sentencing, as well as providing adequate deterrence and reasonable punishment where appropriate. As law makers we must act on this in order to fulfil our obligations to the very hard working police, the victims of crime and to the community in general."

4. The Rann Government's plan to abolish the Legislative Council

"I wish to state for the record that I will in no way support the government's proposal to abolish this Legislative Council. There is simply no justification to abolish this council, especially in light of the fact that the overwhelming majority of government-initiated legislation passed both houses of parliament and became law over the past four years."

5. Generally...

"Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the people of South Australia for entrusting me with the responsibility of representing them in this chamber for the years ahead. We are all very fortunate indeed to live in this wonderful state, and over the next eight years I hope to contribute to making South Australia a place where families thrive, where people feel safe in their homes and on the streets, where hard work is rewarded, where there are strong deterrents and punishment of criminal activity, where the sanctity of life is valued above all else and where decency, generosity and family values are championed in the parliament, in legislation and in the wider community."

If you would like a copy of my maiden speech, I would be delighted to email you a copy. Please email Kimberley Watts at kimberley.watts@parliament.sa.gov.au and we will forward you a copy.

Government and Opposition Acknowledge Family First Initiative

In many cases over the past 3 years, some members of the Government have continued to take credit for Hon Andrew Evans MLC's initiative to amend the Criminal Law Consolidation Act removing the 1982 statute of limitations for prosecution of certain sexual offences including child sexual abuse. This means that victims who were sexually abused by offenders could seek justice by allowing old cases to be reopened (which was not the case before Family First's bill).

Recently in the Legislative Council however, I am pleased to report, as outlined below, that both the Government and the Opposition have recognised that this important legislative change was initiated and fostered by Family First.

Below is the Hansard Report from June 22nd 2006:

The Hon. R.D. LAWSON: One thing I should mention at the outset of the committee stage (and I should have mentioned during my second reading contribution) is that the Liberal opposition certainly does recognise and acknowledge the great work that the Hon. Andrew Evans did in removing the statutory bar which existed. We were glad, as was the government eventually, to support that. It was always a matter of regret that the government, for a long time, took credit for that initiative, but credit ought be given where it is due, and we are indebted to the Hon. Andrew Evans (as are the victims of sexual abuse) for that initiative.

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: It has been said before by my colleague the Attorney-General, but I am certainly happy to place on the record our appreciation of the action of Mr Evans as well, in relation to his bill to allow these old cases to be reopened.

Email Address

If you would like more regular updates, or find it easier to use email, please email us with your details and we will make sure you receive regular updates via email.

You can email your contact details to sa@familyfirst.org.au

Speaking Engagements

Since my election to the Legislative Council, I have been involved in speaking at several functions held by community groups, church events and leaders seminars. I always enjoy these opportunities and am available to speak at community events. I can also give a brief update on the latest happenings in Parliament if that is desired. I come at no cost.

Finally...

I want to also thank you for the support that you have continued to show Andrew, myself and our staff over the past few months. There is no doubt that Family First would not be where it is today without you and I sincerely thank you.

I will continue to update you on key events in the coming months. Again, thank you for your support. Together we are making a difference.

Yours faithfully,



Hon Dennis Hood MLC