

# Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

*committed to preventing tragedy that arises from illicit drug use*

PO Box 36, HIGGINS ACT 2615

Telephone (06) 254 2961

www.ffdlr.org.au

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **In the best interests of the child: Integration of drug and child protection policies**

The response to the alarming increase in child protection cases across Australia in recent years has ignored the role of drug and alcohol policy.

“We know that abuse of alcohol and other drugs within families is a big factor in many cases of child neglect and abuse,” said Brian McConnell, President of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. For example the National Drug Strategy makes no reference to the needs of children raised in substance misusing families. It is time governments faced up to the problem.”

At the commencement of Drug Action Week on Monday 18 June, Dr Sue Packer, AM, FRACP will address a public forum on “Parental substance abuse, parenting capacity and child protection: always a three way tug of war?”

Dr Packer is a Board member of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) and a member of the Association for Welfare of Child Health (AWCH), the Early Childhood Association, Kidsafe and Defence for Children International.

“We must place the interests of the child first,” said Brian McConnell, President of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. “Too often that has been seen to require taking children away or incarcerating the parents.”

“The outlook for children will be improved if we give priority to health and well-being. The ACT does well in providing an integrated family drug rehabilitation services at Karrilika. More needs to be done in the integration of policy,” stressed Brian McConnell.

The words on the United Kingdom in a recent report of the Australian National Council on Drugs apply to Australia:

*It is particularly worrying that the increasing focus on criminal justice domination of public policy around substance use . . . may increasingly divorce this agenda from the child welfare initiatives. The focus on crime reduction in . . . drug and alcohol policy has tended to narrow the focus to immediately remedial interventions and reduce the longer-term preventative issues around inter-generational transmission of addictive behaviours and associated social problems, including drug-related criminality.*

*The increased public policy emphasis . . . on protecting children and promoting their developmental potential offers a huge opportunity for integrating the policy concerns for children of substance-using parents within a larger, and more mainstream, initiative. However, to date, this opportunity has not been effectively harnessed and addiction policy remains separate from child protection in the majority of local environments.*

### **Details of forum:**

**Monday 18th June, 2007**

**12.30 pm – 2.00pm**

**in the Reception Room, the Legislative Assembly  
Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra**

**For more information: Contact Brian McConnell  
(02) 6254 2961, 04 0907 4033**



**Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform  
invite you to a**

# **PUBLIC FORUM**

*Sponsored by Dr Deb Foskey, MLA*

**Speaker: Dr Sue Packer**

**Topic: Parental substance abuse, parenting capacity and  
child protection:  
always a three way tug of war?**

**on Monday 18th June, 2007**

**12.30 pm – 2.00pm**

**in the Reception Room, the Legislative Assembly  
Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra**

Dr Sue Packer, AM, FRACP, is a Board member of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) and a member of the Association for Welfare of Child Health (AWCH), the Early Childhood Association, Kidsafe and Defence for Children International. Since 1990 she has been the Paediatrician to the ACT Child at Risk Assessment Unit. Her work with child abuse assessment and prevention contributed to the award to her of the Order of Australia.

**Refreshments available**

**No cost**

**Enquiries to: 6257 1786 or 6254 2961**