



Bronwyn Bishop MP

Chairman

House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Family & Human Services

MEDIA RELEASE

14 August 2007

Protecting kids from the impact of parental illicit drug use

The House Families Committee will take evidence tomorrow (15 August) from a mother involved in foster care for 25 years as part of its inquiry into the impact of illicit drugs on families.

In June 2006, more than 13,300 children in out-of-home care were living with foster carers, an increase of 38 per cent since June 2002. Evidence to the committee's inquiry has linked the rise in reports to child protection departments with parental substance abuse.

'The neglect and abuse that illicit drug use by a family member can cause to innocent children warrants a strong approach to prevent future damage and avoid the high chances of intergenerational drug use and disadvantage', Committee Chairman Bronwyn Bishop said.

One of the key determinants of a child's outcome in out-of-home care is stability of placement, or permanency. If a child cannot obtain a stable placement within 12 months, then his or her behaviour tends to deteriorate.

A national shortage of foster carers and an anti-adoption culture in state child protection departments is putting increased pressure on the remaining foster carers and is potentially putting children at risk when a child is not able to be placed into appropriate care.

'The rights of children living in households with parental illicit drug use need to be recognised and promoted.' Mrs Bishop said. 'Foster care, and other forms of long-term care such as adoption, need to be strengthened so that children are not being left in households where their future is being jeopardised'.

The hearing is open to all members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

Date: Wednesday 15 August 2007

Time: 10:15 am – 11:30 am

Venue: Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra

Live audio broadcast will be available at <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

For media interview: Please contact Damien Jones on **0409 147 247** at the electorate office of the Committee Chairman the Hon Mrs Bronwyn Bishop MP.

For further information on making a submission: contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4566 or email fhs.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/illicitdrugs/index.htm>