



# Bronwyn Bishop MP

*Chairman*

House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Family & Human Services

## MEDIA RELEASE

13 March 2007

# Addicted from birth: the impact of illicit drugs on infant health

Seven per cent of babies born in a Perth hospital have chemical dependency problems, prompting the House of Representatives Families Committee to take evidence in WA as part of its inquiry into the impact of illicit drugs on families.

Announcing tomorrow's public hearing in Perth, Committee Chairman Bronwyn Bishop said it was important to hear from practitioners at the Antenatal Chemical Dependency Clinic from King Edward Memorial Hospital about the problems faced by babies whose mothers have a drug dependency. They will give evidence on how maternal use of illicit drugs such as amphetamine, heroin, ecstasy and ice can affect fetal development and infant health.

Practitioners at the clinic recently estimated that of the 5000 babies born in the hospital every year, approximately seven per cent had chemical dependency problems from maternal substance use.

Perth Women's Centre will give evidence on their program that provides counselling, information and support to women who are pregnant and/or parenting and using illicit drugs.

'Illicit drug use can be destructive for all types of families, but it is particularly sad when the victims are newborn children', said Mrs Bishop.

'We need to better prevent and treat drug addiction and I look forward to the information to come out of the public hearing.'

Also giving evidence will be the National Drug Research Institute of Curtin University, the Drug and Alcohol Office of Western Australia, the Parent Drug Information Service, and the Coalition Against Drugs WA.

### PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

**Date** Wednesday 14 March 2007  
**Venue** Commonwealth Offices, Level 39, Exchange Plaza, 2 The Esplanade, Perth

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|---------------|--|
| 8.30 – 9.00   | Drug and Alcohol Office  |
| 9.00 – 9.45   | Antenatal Chemical Dependency Clinic, King Edward Memorial Hospital                                |
| 9.45 – 10.30  | Coalition Against Drugs WA   |
| 10.45 – 11.30 | National Drug Research Institute   |
| 11.30 – 12.15 | Parent Drug Information Service  |
| 12.45 – 1.30  | Perth Women's Centre – Pregnancy, Parenting and Illicit Substance Use Women and Children's Program |

**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 or visit the website at

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/illicitdrugs/index.htm>