

Submission No: 158

Supp to Sub:

AUTHORISED:

30/5/07

Inquiry into the Impact of Illicit Drug Use on Families

FROM: FAMILY MATTERS SA INC

Family Matters SA Inc is the only South Australian based organisation specifically operating to support, counsel, inform and educate all families members effected by a loved ones drug and/or alcohol use.

Family Matter's own data collection sourced from current clients confirms that:

- 16 people are emotionally/financially effected by another's substance use
- Alcohol is the biggest problem
- Mental health issues are a major issue with families and have increased
- Women, especially single mothers are less likely to seek help and treatment
- Women are afraid that they will loose their children to the "system" or an ex-partner
- Grandparents are the main group who take care of children effected
- Domestic violence associated with alcohol/drug use is not just perpetrated against a partner, but children, parents and grandparents
- Binge drinking is often called "social drinking", therefore making it acceptable

Families become dysfunctional, creating a larger problem for society and substance abuse becomes generational, children growing up to believe it is perfectly normal to drink to access, use illicit drugs and act out in violent and anti-social ways.

Some of our recommendations through data collection and reporting are:

- Provide more support for families
- Devote more funding to family inclusive programs
- Need to concentrate on alcohol and its effects

Family Matters SA Inc, provides programs for:

- Women with children seeking treatment
- Parents of substance users support groups and counselling
- Educational workshops for all the family
- Family inclusive counselling
- Options for children in the care of a Drug/Alcohol user

Through Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia other options are available to families.

Families find it difficult to access support and counselling, the drug or alcohol user are priority on waiting long waiting lists and there is a definite lack of counsellors who treat family members and include family members in treatment.

Families are effected emotionally, financially, physically and spiritually. Many Parents of users take care of their grandchildren without any financial support and Centrelink entitlements.

As Family Matters SA Inc's representative and Executive Officer I wish to give verbal evidence at the enquiry.

My own personal struggle with illicit drugs and alcohol impacted on my family enormously. My Father became gravely ill during this time and the stress from his daughter's illicit drug use contributed to his death.

Although it has been some 5 years since I last used any form of drug and alcohol, my family still find it hard to come to terms with the devastation that still impacts on them, especially financially. They still find it hard to trust and I am still estranged from my siblings.

Through my journey of recovery over the last 5 years, I am now a worthwhile and productive member of society. I am newly married, have a job for which I am passionate about (helping families of substance users) and I foster 3 children, all of whose parents use illicit drugs.

I wish to give verbal evidence at the enquiry from the point of view of a counsellor working directly with families of substance users, a former addict/alcoholic and a foster parent of children effected.

I look forward to your response.

Elizabeth Evans
Executive Officer
Family Matters SA Inc