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MEDIA RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Howard & Baker Send Wrong Signals on Prohibition.

HEMP SA have criticised the comments by PM John Howard in Parliamentary question time Wednesday, and yesterday by SA Police Minister Stephen Baker. They have completely failed to understand the urgent need for a new approach to dealing with the issue of illicit drugs in Australia. Despite tough laws that have criminalised over 200,000 young people some 40% of the total population - seven million Australians have tried Cannabis!

"Messrs Howard and Baker have failed to acknowledge what Professor Penington's report found: that prohibition has failed; our current laws don't (and can't) stop our kids using Cannabis, they just protect a multi-billion dollar black market. Only by regulating availability can the government introduce some measure of supervision, quality control, education and taxation over of illicit drugs." said HEMP SA spokesperson Mr Jamnes Danenberg.

"The US experience has shown that even spending \$60 Billion a year, incarcerating more prisoners per head of population than any other country, still leaves them with higher levels of illicit drug use than Holland, where Cannabis is freely available from government supervised coffeeshops." he added.

"The belief that 'relaxing the laws' will send the wrong signal are false; it sends the right signal: Our politicians are committed to reducing drug related harm to individuals and the community." he said. Such a measure would have widespread support; according to Australia's own National Drug Strategy (1994) some 75% of people support decriminalisation, whilst 50% supported outright legalisation.

HEMP SA are calling on all politicians to make an informed decision on forthcoming legislation based on a sound understanding of the facts.

"We are urging Mr Howard, all State politicians and all concerned Australians to read the Penington Report and get the true picture, free of myth and misinformation." he said.

For more information call Mr Jamnes Danenberg on (08) 8297 9442

Help End Marijuana Prohibition