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Date: 2nd May 2003

Title: “South Australian Magistrate Should Be Dismissed Says National Organisations for Drug Users and Sex Workers”

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League, (AIVL) the national peak organisation representing illicit drug users and the Scarlet Alliance the national peak organisation for sex workers have called upon the South Australian Government and legal system to move to dismiss Magistrate Michael Frederick for his recent offensive comments towards Ms Tashara Were.

Annie Madden, AIVL Executive Officer said “the Magistrate’s comments are a disgrace and bring shame upon the entire legal system. Illicit drug users are part of the community and deserve to be treated with the same respect and dignity as other people in society” she added.

Janelle Fawkes, President of Scarlet Alliance stated that “people who engage in street-based sex work are doing so to support themselves financially. It is clear the offensive comments directed at Tashara are a result of incorrect and ill-informed stereotypes.”

“The whole basis of our legal system is that it should be ‘blind’ to making moral, political or social judgments about the people appearing before the court. No-one should be spoken to in the way that Magistrate Frederick spoke to Ms Were. It was inhuman, disrespectful and discriminatory.” added Ms Madden.

AIVL and Scarlet Alliance believe that it is time for the health and human rights of illicit drug users and sex workers to be recognised within the community. They argue that they are tired of being treated as less than human by police, the courts and the government.

“Those who represent our judicial system hold a position of authority within our community. Allowing abuse of this power in such a way only serves to send a message to the broader community that discrimination and stigmatisation are acceptable.” Ms Fawkes said.

Ms. Madden concluded by saying, “That the comments made by the South Australian Attorney General on this matter have been completely irresponsible and inappropriate. Our politicians need to represent all Australians not just the ones they like or the ones that agree with their political and moral viewpoint. Ms Were has not only been completely let down by the South Australian legal system but she has also been let down by the very person who has been elected to uphold and protect her legal rights – the South Australian Attorney General.”

For further comment please contact: