

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SOUTH AUSTRALIA



MEDIA ALERT: 'OPERATION PISS-TAKE'

PROTEST AGAINST DRUG-TESTING OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS

WHEN: Friday June 23, 1pm

WHERE: Outside electorate office of Christopher Pyne, Liberal MP for Sturt, 429 Magill Road, St. Morris

FILM/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Jars and trays of mock urine, mock biohazard suits, lab coats, banners, signs

Anti-Poverty Network SA is deeply opposed to the proposed drug-testing of 5,000 Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients – announced in the 2017-2018 federal budget – and will express its opposition outside the office of Christopher Pyne, SA's most senior federal Liberal Party MP.

This invasive measure that will only add to the considerable stigma and stress experienced by welfare recipients. 42 percent of people in Australia are reported to have used illegal drugs at some point in their lives – this is not restricted to welfare recipients. This discriminatory scheme treats Centrelink clients like second-class citizens.

“The Turnbull government does not care about getting addicts the support they need. This policy is designed to portray the unemployed as drug addicts in order to distract the public from the government's failure to provide enough jobs”, said Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Nijole Naujokas.

Experts such as ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Service) and SANDAS (South Australian Network of Alcohol and Drug Services) have rejected drug-testing as being harmful to those battling substance abuse, and likely to discourage them from seeking help.

A government that cared about drug abuse would not have cut \$1 billion from welfare services, which is what the government has done since the 2013 election. Current drug treatment services are unlikely to cope with the extra numbers of clients forced to seek treatment.

Drug-testing programs elsewhere in the US have been shown to be a waste of money, with little evidence of beneficial outcomes. In Arizona, only 2 out of 108,408 welfare-recipients who were drug-tested between 2011-2014 returned positive results.

Recently, the Victorian government has announced that it will not cooperate with this policy. We hope the South Australian government will also refuse to participate.

FURTHER INFO: Nijole Naujokas on 0439 437 978, Pas Forgione on 0411 587 663 or antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com