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**South Australian Association of State School Organisations Inc**

Monday November 26, 2012

The Hon Grace Portolesi  
Minister for Education and Child Development  
31 Flinders Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Minister,

Since the revelation of the sex abuse cover up at an Adelaide primary school, our association has received a stream of calls and emails from parents. They have asked us, on their behalf, to express the disgust they feel at the conduct of your department.

Unconcerned with the politics of this situation, what concerns parents most is ensuring such inappropriate conduct by your office and your department cannot be repeated. Parents have little faith that your internal review process will yield the necessary results. You instigated a blame game between your department and SAPOL - you cannot be surprised that parents are not comfortable with these two departments now deciding what rights they have to information about what happens to their children.

Many parents are also appalled at your personal conduct; having known about this since March and chosen to keep it quiet. Parents are uninterested in the blame game. To them, this was always the very easiest of decisions - when a child has been exposed to a sexual predator, the very first priority must be to tell their parents. For parents, this is just common sense, unclouded by bureaucratic nonsense.

Parents, many of them volunteers in your schools, were also bitterly disappointed at Premier Weatherill's attempt to blame the Governing Council. Counsellors we have spoken to feel this reflects contemptuous regard for the role of the Governing Council. Mr Weatherill's conduct literally added insult to injury.

Minister, parents want to decide when they will be told if a paedophile has had access to their children. As a mother, I don't see how you could in conscience, deny them this right.

As such, we ask, as the state's public school parent association, that rather than your proposed in-house review, you agree to the following:

Convene a panel to determine a suitable policy for the dissemination of information to parents pertaining the welfare of their children.

This panel will be comprised of an equal number of:

- Parents - nominated by SAASSO and approved by yourself
- Administrative officers - appointed by your office

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Additionally, there would be an independent chair, without a vote, approved by both your office and SAASSO.

This equality of authority will ensure the government can maintain appropriate regulations and parents can maintain focus on the wellbeing of children.

Minister, parents are fed up with being told their rights. They are fed up with token consultation. They want to decide for themselves what rights they have.

You cannot argue that throughout this sad episode, it is parents who have shown their sole priority is the welfare of children. With the slow release of information, it is becoming clear that if your department had simply stayed out of it and let the parents on the Governing Council decide - if they had been allowed to do their job without hindrance - these shameful events would not have occurred.

Most important, if your department had let the parents and Governing Council act their conscience without interference - the parents of this local school would have known of the danger posed to their children in 2010. They could then have sought assistance to see if any more children had been molested by this man - and then gotten their children the help they need. To have risked a child living with this sort of trauma for two years is literally inexcusable - there is no explanation that can justify such irresponsible behaviour.

We plead with you now to allow parents the basic right to protect their own children.

Minister, your office has a disappointing legacy of replying to requests made by our association. We generally wait months and often receive little more than a press release in response. We will soon be communicating with our members - who are desperate for information. We hope that you will treat our request with the urgency and priority it deserves.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Hindle', written in a cursive style.

Lauren Hindle  
Vice-President