



COLD HEARTED LAW: Monica Perrett and supporters march to change the law for foster parents.

Picture: SAM WUNDKE

March to bring foster carers in from the cold

JADE GAILBERGER

OUT of the fog and the mist they came. Emerging from the morning gloom, they carried a message to the steps of State Parliament and to Premier Jay Weatherill that he has to honour his promise to respect the rights of foster parents.

Led by former mother of the year Monica Perrett, the trek started at Crafers and ended four hours later on North Tce.

"This long painful walk has just proven we mean business and the more they knock us back, the more we are going to fight," she said.

Ms Perrett was promised action would be taken to legislate "Finn's Law" last year, named after Ms Perrett's three-month-old foster child, Finn, who passed away while in her care. She wants changes to state law to allow foster carers to have access to the body, make funeral arrangements and be acknowledged on the death certificate.

"They (the State Government) keep telling us that it's too hard to do," she said.

"It's not fair on the child you have lost ... Like Finn, he was only three months old and he didn't know his biological parents and then to strip a child of the family they've only ever known."

"This is a heartless law ... I'm doing this for every single foster parent in South Australia and hopefully Australia."

After meeting Ms Perrett two months ago, Child Development Minister Susan Close yesterday said she was "sympathetic", and that the Government was working as quickly as they could.

"There is a policy and legislative has towards the biological parents, even when those parents are no longer the primary or carers at all of the children," Ms Close said.

"(Liberal MP) Adrian Pedrick has put forward a bill and has been working with us ... I suspect that it's likely to be regulation change rather than legislative change."

Minister Close said she expects to be able to make some changes by the end of the year.

Cannabis rings boss jailed for joint crimes

ANDREW DOWDELL

A RINGLEADER in an interstate cannabis syndicate that reaped about \$7 million has been jailed for more than 12 years.

Storm Alexander Strang (right) pleaded guilty to participating in a criminal organisation, drug trafficking and 14 counts of money laundering.

Strang, 44, was among a group of 13 people arrested in January 2013 and charged over the drug trafficking racket.

District Court judge Rauf Soulio said Strang was in a "position of some leadership" within the group and had arranged for 11 tonnes of cannabis to be sent to Queensland.

Judge Soulio said the syndicate earned about \$7 million from the sale of cannabis in 2012 and early 2013.

During sentencing submissions, lawyers for Strang said the syndicate was "not

a pyramid scheme" and relied equally on each member.

Judge Soulio said he had no option but to impose a lengthy prison term, despite believing Strang had good prospects of rehabilitation.

A number of people wrote letters of support for Strang and expressed surprise that he had been involved in the syndicate.

Judge Soulio said the references showed Strang was a devoted father and highly intelligent man who had a strong work history despite only completing Year 9 at high school.

"I can only trust that you use the time that you are forced to spend in custody in the most constructive way you can," Judge Soulio said.



Strang was given a 40 per cent reduction on his sentence for his early guilty plea and cooperation with police.

Judge Soulio imposed a head sentence of 12 years and eight months, with a non-parole period of seven years and eight months.

At the time of the arrests, police alleged the syndicate reaped about \$40 million over four years. However, the charges Strang pleaded guilty to related to the period between June 2012 and January 2013.

Strang was the former boyfriend of corrupt police officer Amanda Boughen, who was jailed this year for offences including tipping off Strang to a police drug raid.

Another member of the drug syndicate was former television presenter Clayton Lush, who has pleaded guilty to a raft of charges. He is awaiting sentence in the District Court.

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