



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 25 August 1998

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Drugs

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: There are two great curses for young Queenslanders—indeed, all young Australians—unemployment and drugs. Since my Government's election, Labor has implemented a number of initiatives to break the unemployment cycle for young Queenslanders. My Government makes no apology for being obsessed about jobs and job security. Every Queensland—particularly our young people—deserves a job. As I said, there are two great curses. Drugs have been eating into the lives and minds of our young people for decades, destroying the most important years of their young lives, and, in too many cases, destroying their families.

As honourable members would be aware, State Cabinet met in Ipswich yesterday and took significant decisions to address the curse of drugs. These decisions followed submissions to my Cabinet colleagues at our community forum on Sunday and strong representations by my colleague the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, whose electorate has been the subject of recent media reports about the increase in juvenile drug and crime problems. The initiatives that we announced were based on what the community and the experts wanted. That is what our Community Cabinet forums are all about: listening and responding. I was therefore disappointed to hear the member for Maroochydore attempt to discredit the initiatives with simple knocking. The honourable member did not even come up with an alternative strategy.

For the benefit of those honourable members who are genuinely interested in fighting the scourge of drugs, I will now outline yesterday's Cabinet initiatives. The centrepiece of the seven-point strategy is a combined State Government and community summit. The summit, which will be held before the end of the year, will complement Cabinet's recent decision to establish a task force on crime prevention. In fact, the task force will be charged with ensuring that the summit outcomes are implemented. The Statewide strategy also includes—

increasing the number of night counsellors and funding other initiatives to assist young Queenslanders as part of the \$1m Youth Crime Prevention Grants Scheme;

increasing the police presence in drug problem areas, particularly targeting drug dealers around schools;

a Statewide pilot scheme to trial new juvenile justice community centres aimed at helping young offenders to break the crime and drug cycles. A centre will open in Ipswich as part of the pilot study;

working with police, health authorities, school P & Cs, teachers and the Queensland Teachers Union to ensure that drug awareness campaigns in schools are properly targeted and relevant. This will be done in conjunction with the Government's \$5.6m School Nurse Counsellors Program;

accelerating the Urban Renewal Scheme and increasing community involvement in the scheme, particularly in areas of high juvenile and drug-related crimes; and

increasing awareness among employers in high juvenile crime areas of Government packages such as incentives to employ more apprentices and trainees.

Following the submissions by the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, State Cabinet also approved a number of immediate initiatives for the Goodna/Redbank Plains area. These include extra police at Goodna and \$125,000 to fund an improved response from youth worker agencies, including a night work counselling program and expanded programs for young adolescents after school. The Department of Public Works and Housing will also make a house available in Goodna for use by community agencies working with young people. Cabinet also gave in principle support to expand the Peacemaker Program at the Goodna State School.

As I said, I am disappointed that these initiatives have not received the bipartisan support that they deserve. I urge the Opposition to reconsider its position. The curse of drugs will not be beaten by political rhetoric. We, as the elected representatives of the people of Queensland, must act in a determined and united manner. Anything less can result only in more young people's lives being lost.

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