



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 10 March 1999

DRUG COURTS

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.20 a.m.): In the past week it has been amusing to see the Queensland Labor Party stumble over itself in a hasty and desperate bid to adopt coalition policy. It is no secret that the State coalition has long been at the forefront in tackling the problem of drugs in our society. That is why the State coalition announced that it would trial a drug court program in Brisbane when re-elected at the next State election. Of course, at the time of the announcement there was no indication of support from the Premier. Equally, there was no indication of support from the member for Ashgrove, who last week said that a drug court trial should be set up as a matter of haste.

Instead, the Labor Party ran dead. When the Attorney-General was questioned about the proposal, all he could say was, "Let's wait and see how the trial in New South Wales goes first." Members could imagine my surprise when in the Sunday Mail a week ago I read that the Premier was now wanting to look at a trial of the drug court program, and they could imagine my surprise when I heard the member for Ashgrove endorse the Premier's comments.

It certainly speaks volumes for the Premier's credibility when we realise that he was unable to offer bipartisan political support at the time a working model of the proposal was first suggested by the State coalition almost six weeks ago. The Premier ended up endorsing the proposal only after the Victims of Crime Association, the Civil Liberties Council and drug support groups positively heralded and offered their support for the coalition's initiative.

Drug courts do work. Various models have been trialled in the United States. Some models work better than others. It should also be noted that in the United States drug courts are not used solely for people on heroin. They work for people addicted to a host of drugs and for people with alcohol problems. I urge the Premier to work with the coalition in a genuine spirit of bipartisanship to develop the concept of drug courts as a matter of urgency to tackle the very serious health issue of drugs in our community.
