



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

Hansard 19 July 2000

DRUGS MISUSE AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (3.41 p.m.): I will not take much time speaking to this Bill, as previous speakers seemed to cover the areas which I planned to address. I say at the outset that I will be supporting the Bill.

With the Olympics so close, the focus is very much on the issue of drugs in sport, and rightly so. Anyone found guilty of the misuse of performance enhancing drugs is merely displaying a desperate attempt to obtain glory at any cost and more often than not at the risk of that person's own health. I believe that we all have a responsibility in this respect as we push our young athletes harder and harder to achieve. At the moment, Ian Thorpe's feet have been used as an indication of drug use. My son wears size 16 shoes, and his feet were that size when he was only nine and a half. I can assure every member of this House that that definitely was not due to drug abuse.

We have also encouraged an unrealistic image for our young people. In common with the member for Gladstone, I saw a program which showed computer body sculpturing. We must take some responsibility for the health-threatening conditions that are facing our youngsters, including drug abuse, because it is the fake images that the media promotes which push our young people to risk their own health and lives.

The use of ephedrine by truckies has been a problem for the transport industry for many years and, unfortunately, the industry itself has had trouble in stamping out its use. A long, long time ago when working what was commonly called the dog watch between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., I was offered ephedrine to assist in keeping me awake. It was very readily available then and it is as readily available now. There are many reasons why truckies and others push themselves so hard, and their needs must be acknowledged and addressed.

Rohypnol, as everyone has said, is commonly called the date rape drug. It has been mentioned often today by speakers to this Bill. Of all the abuses of drugs, I think this is the most contemptible. Any man or woman carrying this drug in their pocket has ill intent. I do not believe anyone would feel sympathy for the perpetrator of such an act if they received the harshest of penalties, and I would endorse any legislation which delivered the harshest of sentences. This crime is worse than rape in that the person being attacked has not got their wits about them and cannot actively defend themselves. The amendment to be moved by the Opposition at the Committee stage will definitely have my support.

Every year the innocence and security of our youngsters is stripped away more and more. It is difficult to find any young person who has not been a drug user or who has not been offered some of these drugs, often being told that it will give them that extra something to make the night exceptional. The thrill of trying something that adults advise against is enough reason for kids to do anything these days. Reactions to these drugs have ranged from a high to the ultimate low of death, whether through the drug itself or through the individual being rendered so vulnerable as to subject themselves to assault, abduction or even murder.

The ongoing leniency displayed by many of those in a position to make a difference is frightening. It is not necessary to accept something because it is common. Just because the majority are doing drugs, it does not mean that they are right. As a result of studying the people who do drugs, those who can speak with authority on the issue will say that those who are using are not responsible

for their actions; that because of their intolerable cravings, they are not sufficiently in control to make the right decisions for themselves.

I support this Bill and I congratulate the Minister on it. I only hope that the Minister supports the Opposition's amendments as well. I commend the Bill to the House.
