



Speech by

BARBARA STONE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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DRUG AWARENESS FORUM

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): Recently, I held a 'drugs in the community' forum for the people of Springwood. Like the recent *60 Minutes* program, the night was about getting the community together to talk about the issues of this international problem. It was to provide new information to the community and for me to actively listen to the people of the Springwood electorate. I do not think anyone in that room—nor anyone in this room—would say that they have never been affected by the drugs issue. If it has not affected someone in their own family, it has probably affected their extended family, their neighbours or their family, their friends, or maybe they have been a victim of a drug-related crime. The drug issue is such a complex issue. It is not just about drug users or sellers, it is not just about young people, it is not just about law and order nor is it just about low socioeconomics; it is a web of complex issues.

The first speaker at the forum was Mrs Philio Bird from the Ethnic Mental Health Program. I had heard Philio speak at another drug awareness night and was so impressed that I decided to ask her to speak at my forum. The best thing about Philio's talk is that she told it to us so plainly and simply. She deals with this problem every day and told us what is going on out there from first-hand experience. Many of her stories will shock people. She speaks about a nine year old client who said, 'You are looking a bit down today. Would you like me to get you something to pick you up, make you high?' That is right—a nine year old child!

Philio's talk was warmly received and question and answer time was full of interesting discussion. Not everyone in that room would have agreed with everything that people said, but it did create an environment for discussion to flow freely. Some very different and controversial ideas were raised and discussed.

The second speaker, Mr David Floyd, from the Lions Drug Awareness Program, gave valuable information to attendees on practical examples of what the Lions Drug Awareness Program is providing. They have videos, workshops and brochures dealing with different aspects of the drug issue. To coincide with the Olympic Games last year they put out a video for high school students regarding drugs in sport. They are still implementing new ideas and are fully committed to helping the community regarding this issue. All of us in that room agreed that no individual, no government and no organisation has the solution to this problem. It was agreed that, as a community, we have to be active in dealing with the problem and not pushing it aside, and that is what the Beattie Labor government is doing—dealing with the complex issues. We heard that this morning in a ministerial statement from the Minister for Health.

I have listened to the people of Springwood and they tell me that they want less paper communication and more practical assistance from professionals. In particular, the participants felt that doctors should regard this as a specialist area and have specific training to deal with the issue. I thank the people of Springwood for taking the time to come to the forum and to participate. Their participation was a major part of the night. We heard many of their stories on the night. One such story of a gentleman with a son addicted to cannabis stays in my mind. This man will do and is trying to do whatever it takes to help his 23 year old son. I know we were able to give him some information to assist him and his family. I hope that he is successful.

What made the night successful was knowing that everyone went home having learned more about the issue than they knew before they attended. I look forward to many more community forums with the people of Springwood on issues that are of concern to them.
