



Speech by

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DETOXIFICATION PROGRAMS, SUNSHINE COAST

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (6.51 p.m.): I wish to talk once again on the very important issue of drug and alcohol abuse in our community, particularly illicit drug abuse. I refer specifically to the Sunshine Coast and its very real need for services to meaningfully and effectively address that problem.

Basically, there are next to no services on the Sunshine Coast. The detoxification beds at Nambour Hospital have been closed. When people are finally admitted for detoxification they are put into the general wards. They are not put into specific detoxification wards. Nurses, patients and people from other agencies who have a concern for and interest in those people say that it is not world's best practice to have people who are going through a process of detoxification in general wards with other patients. We need a number of specifically dedicated detoxification beds. We also need services attached to the detoxification beds to provide follow-up and rehabilitation programs.

One of the most serious issues affecting our young people today is illicit drug use. Some will experiment and not get caught in the web of drug abuse. Unfortunately, others have one hit and are hooked for life. Tragically, through factors such as low self-esteem and, in many cases, having suffered abuse in their own lives—or whatever the reasons—others are taken into a life of drugs. They find that they are caught in a web. Despite their wanting to get free of that web, they need assistance. More and more people are recognising the fact that, first and foremost, the preventive message is important. However, when someone does get caught in the drug lifestyle, they need assistance.

The Sunshine Coast has no dedicated detoxification beds. I believe that that trend has been repeated throughout rural and regional hospitals in Queensland, and it is a wrong policy decision of this government. I urge the government to review the decision. I have talked to people who need those services. They know that they need help from people who are trained specifically to deal with their problems. They do not want to be made to feel like social pariahs when they are placed in general wards with different types of patients.

When young people are affected by amphetamines and the only program that is available in their local area is the methadone program, one realises how out of touch a lot of the government-provided services are with the real needs of young people in our community. Some young people face polydrug issues. A whole generation needs to see real and identifiable services provided. We know what the existing targets are, although no targets have been published at this time. If we are to effectively address the drug problem on the Sunshine Coast, we need to know how long it will take for those services to reach young people.
