



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 4 April 2001

DRUG STRATEGY

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.26 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I congratulate the member for Toowoomba South on bringing this issue into the parliament. I also find myself basically in agreement with the amendment moved by the government. However, I think it is safe to say that the fine-sounding rhetoric we heard here tonight is the easy part of the battle against drugs. The challenge for the government is not to come in here and repeat oft-used phrases about what it is going to do; it is to deliver some real action out there in the community, to get some runs on the board in terms of a battle against drugs in our community.

Suggestions this week that the authorities have lost the war on drugs in many parts of Brisbane should be of huge concern to everyone concerned about our society's future. They should be, and are, of huge concern to all of us who are parents and who know the worry of parenting teenage children.

I share the concerns of many about the policy of harm minimisation, which is making no real effort to target the debilitating problem so evidently rife among many sections of our community. The policy of harm minimisation is simply not working. It is not reducing the problem in any way. It is causing huge frustrations to those police officers involved in enforcing our current laws. There is no real commitment in a policy of harm minimisation to achieving an effective, long-term reduction in the problem. In fact, as the government makes no real effort to reduce the problem by pursuing harm minimisation strategies and turning needle exchange programs into needle distribution programs, the trade will undoubtedly continue to grow, as it is certainly in the drug dealers' interests to expand their deadly trade.

It should concern every Queenslander that the Brisbane Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley, is leading moves in the Labor Party to weaken laws in relation to drugs, claiming that the battle has been lost. He advocates heroin injecting rooms and believes that the illegality of drugs should be removed in the long term. Brisbane's Lord Mayor has been reported in the media as saying that he is disgusted with the federal government's new anti-drugs campaign. To have any success in the difficult environment, any anti-drugs campaign needs across-the-board support from all levels of government. That is why this parliament should support this motion tonight and why Jim Soorley should be made aware of this parliament's position and urged to rethink his position.

In any public place in Brisbane it is not unusual to find the discarded syringes and other signs of the illegal trade that has ruined the lives of so many young people. Increasingly our rural communities are being targeted by drug dealers, who are ruthless in their efforts to recruit new users. I have heard reports in my own electorate of dealers offering heroin starter packs to young people for as little as \$5 in an attempt to hook new users, who are then forced into a lifetime of crime to support a habit which they cannot break.

I have been trying to help some constituents from my electorate to access help for their daughter, who has become involved in the drug lifestyle. Their story, like so many others, is one of family heartbreak. To listen to their story would break any parent's heart. No-one who has shared such personal details of family disaster and young lives wasted could ever support the surrender option on drugs.

The fact that high-profile people in the Labor Party, like Brisbane's Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley, are calling for legalised injecting rooms and decriminalising some drugs is an indictment on the harm

minimisation policy that those people have pursued until now. We have developed, and will continue to support, an integrated program covering the six points outlined in this motion. One of those points, point (d), calls for properly resourced police and anti-crime agencies to pursue drug producers and suppliers of drugs.

This parliament should wholeheartedly and unanimously support the Queensland Police Service's proactive lead in the fight against illegal drugs, including the crucial area of criminal intelligence. We should be making every resource available to fight against major organised crime, including organised drug-related crime, and we should be strengthening and improving school-based policing and the drug and alcohol community education resource programs which are currently available.

I will continue to support the major increases in the resources allocated to fight the drug problem. I will continue to support in this parliament major increases in resources being made available to the police officers who are the front line of society's fight against the drug problem. We need to attack the dealers in death with better investigative resources and tougher no-sympathy sentences when they are caught. We need to ensure that enough help is available to assist every user to escape the addictions that are ruining their lives. But most of all, we need to do everything humanly possible to empower every young person to be able to avoid the traps.

Time expired.
