



Speech by

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard 16 October 2001

RETRACTABLE NEEDLES

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.58 p.m.): I have spoken previously about the need to introduce retractable syringes into high-risk areas, starting with the syringes supplied to drug-dependent people. I still abide by that. Previously, I have tabled syringes that are to all intents and purposes retractable. They have not been registered in Australia as retractable syringes simply because we do not have a standard, but they are sound, reliable and very difficult to destroy to the point where the syringe becomes exposed and innocent people could suffer needle-stick injuries.

I wish to address another sector who use needles, that is those who are required to inject prescribed medications. I present to the House another alternative retractable needle that is available to Queensland Health and health professionals in this state that allows people such as diabetics—and I am thinking particularly of young diabetics who are still at school—to be able to administer their medication in a private manner and still be able to dispose of their syringes responsibly.

Without intending to endorse any one company, I have an example here of a syringe kit that has been put out by a group called Harm Reduction Services. They forwarded these kits to Cindy Bush, who is the chair of the Needlestick Action Group, and she lives in my electorate. These are very tidy kits. These two that I have are unopened and, therefore, contain syringes. These other two have been opened and they are quite harmless. This syringe kit is very tidy. It would not be any good for illicit drug users, because it requires some degree of responsible handling. The disposal equipment comes with a saline solution and swabs. Once the syringe has been used—and, as I said, I have two that have been used—the syringe and the needle are placed inside that container. That can be disposed of in any receptacle—whether it is a garbage can or an actual needle receptacle. If anyone tries to retract the syringe, the needle has been destroyed, because of a mechanism in the point. The only thing that they can get out is the plunger. I suppose they can poke someone's eye in with that, but that is about all.

I would like to table that unopened syringe kit. I do not want to worry the table staff by tabling one that has the syringe exposed. Currently, these kits are available in New South Wales and Victoria. If they are purchased in bulk, they cost about 40c a unit, that is, 40c for the case that contains the needle.

I think that members would agree that, for young people particularly who have to inject in a school toilet facility or wherever they go for privacy, that is a very neat package for them to carry around. I seek leave to table that and also the information from Harm Reduction Services.

Leave granted.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Much has been said about the availability of retractable syringes.

Time expired.
