



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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DRUGS MISUSE (AMPHETAMINE OFFENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.10 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse (Amphetamine Offences) Amendment Bill is one small part of the approach that the National Party opposition has taken for some time to a comprehensive attack on drugs. That includes the 33-point crackdown policy that the National Party and the Liberal Party took to the last election.

I am sorry that the Attorney-General has just left the chamber. Tonight he has shown an abysmal lack of knowledge of the Drugs Misuse Act. He is the very person who has brought into this parliament a regulation that mirrors this legislation, yet he says that our bill is ad hoc, a knee-jerk reaction and part of an auction for the highest penalty. The minister has participated in exactly the same action, because he knows that his legislation was not addressing the serious problem of amphetamines.

I refer to one of the key points the minister made in his speech tonight—that is, that penalties do not deter those who are on drugs. Again he displayed his total lack of knowledge of the Drugs Misuse Act because it is about traffickers, dealers and sellers, not only users. It is aimed at dealing with the real low-lives of our society who endeavour to make themselves wealthy from the human misery they peddle.

The Attorney-General has talked about having some sort of comprehensive plan. It was the National Party that earlier in this parliament moved a private member's motion relating to the principles of its 33-point drugs crackdown policy. Those principles were added to in an amendment by the Labor Party. In a bipartisan approach we accepted that amendment and the amended motion was passed unanimously by the parliament. That is a demonstration of how positive and comprehensive the opposition has been in pushing for the adoption of the 33-point drugs crackdown policy. The Attorney-General talked about an auction and asked why we did not take another approach, yet he is participating in an auction by introducing the regulation.

During the previous parliament the shadow Attorney-General first mooted the idea of drug courts and pressured the government into adopting the proposal. We have supported the introduction of drug courts all along. It was the opposition that put before this parliament the principles of the drugs crackdown policy such as increased rehabilitation and detoxification facilities and resources; reform to the justice system, focusing on the rehabilitation of drug users; enhanced drug education and prevention programs; properly resourced police anti-crime agencies to pursue drug producers and suppliers; and tougher sentences for drug traffickers and dealers. We put that forward. The Labor Party government added to that by including, if I remember correctly, provisions relating to the principle of using school nurses and so on. We agreed with all of that because we wanted to see a comprehensive, all-embracing program and strategy for the state and to take a bipartisan approach to the issue.

We heard some rubbish tumble out of the mouth of the Attorney-General here tonight. It is unbelievable that he can come into this House, responsible as he is now for the Drugs Misuse Act—

Mr Springborg: He is following in the footsteps of his predecessor.

Mr HORAN: He has taken over from the Police Minister in terms of administration of the Drugs Misuse Act. Even though he has taken over responsibility for that legislation only in recent times, tonight he displayed an abysmal lack of knowledge and preparation. He does not even understand his own act.

The minister criticised this private member's bill, which sets out to simply amend a schedule so that amphetamines and methylamphetamines are listed in the same schedule as is heroin. That is sought to be done so that offences involving amphetamines and methylamphetamines are dealt with in the same way as offences involving heroin—for dealers, sellers, producers and users. That is to reflect the seriousness of amphetamine use in our society, to reflect the views of the Chief Justice of this state, Justice De Jersey—he has said there is a need for these drugs to be in the same schedule—and to reflect the views of Bob Aldred of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

Those are the reasons we introduced this private member's bill. It was obvious that the government was not going to do anything. We have introduced this proposal as one small cog in the wheel of our all-embracing policies in relation to the fight against drugs. We know that the problem will not be addressed successfully just by penalties, but they are a part of the solution.

We know that we have to front-end load the system and provide young people with confidence and the wherewithal, knowledge and ability to say no to drugs. That is probably their greatest defence of all. We also know that there is a desperate need for 1,200 rehabilitation beds and for some compassionate policies and programs. We know all of that.

This private member's bill is one small cog in the wheel. This private member's bill came about in response to the need espoused by the Chief Justice of this state. For the Attorney-General to come into this House and absolutely flay his own regulations in his attack on this private member's bill is astounding. His regulations have exactly the same effect as the bill.

Is the minister going to tell us that he is in some sort of Dutch auction because he has introduced regulations to put amphetamines and methylamphetamines onto the same schedule as heroin? Is he going to tell us that he is just taking part in a political stunt by doing that? Or is he going to say that he is just following the opposition because we were the ones who forced him to do it? That is the only reason he is responding.

The minister would never have taken this action unless the opposition had put forward this private member's bill. It is quite obvious from his contribution to the debate tonight that the minister does not even understand the Drugs Misuse Act. He does not understand that it is not just about people who use drugs but also about people who market, deal in, sell and produce drugs.

The sort of nonsense we heard from the Attorney-General tonight displays the lack of imagination of the Labor government. It is the Labor government that is addressing drugs in an ad hoc way. It is the opposition with the vision. I give credit to the Liberal Party. When we were in coalition we produced the drugs crackdown policy together.

The 33-point plan is one of the most comprehensive drugs plans ever seen in Australia, if not the world. It addresses every single possible avenue. Through that policy we seek to have put in place a commissioner for drugs so that there is one person in charge to make sure that across all of the departments—Education, Health, Families, Justice, Police or whatever—there is a coordination and focus in order to address the serious problems of drugs. The aim is to bring about a real reduction in usage, particularly by our young people, to bring about a real increase in rehabilitation, to bring about a real crackdown by special drug squads in each and every police district and to bring about that comprehensive program that is needed instead of the ad hoc system run by the Labor government. Its system is ad hoc to the point that as soon as something happens it just follows the opposition. We have had the fortitude to introduce a private member's bill.

It is important that the judiciary, the police and all those others involved in working to reduce drug usage understand the seriousness of amphetamines. It is important that the community understands the seriousness of amphetamines and the extent to which Queensland has become the amphetamine state of Australia. It is important that the community and the justice system realise that, more than any other particular drug, it is amphetamines that drive people to crime. It is amphetamines that focus people to the point that if users decide to commit an armed robbery with violence they will go ahead and do it regardless. Amphetamines will also spur on a truck driver to continue driving for 36 or 40 hours. That is the danger of amphetamines. People get so focused that they go ahead with the commission of a crime, regardless of any changed circumstances and regardless of what happens. That is why these are some of the most dangerous drugs in our community.

That is why the opposition has put forward this good private member's bill. I encourage members to vote for it. This legislation is more important because it will be decided on by the parliament, not by the cabinet. The cabinet put in place a regulation, which happens to mirror this bill, but this legislation is more powerful. This legislation comes from this House.

Time expired.
