



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard 4 April 2001

DRUG STRATEGY

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.41 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the amended motion moved by the Attorney-General. The issue of drugs in our community is one which concerns all Queenslanders. It is very complex. One only has to see the movie *Traffic*, which is showing at the moment, to appreciate how complex the issue is overseas as well as in Australia.

The Beattie government, more than any other government, has initiated across the whole of government new approaches and new methods to break the drug cycle. Our Tough on Crime, Tough on the Causes of Crime strategy is one of the most comprehensive approaches to this issue. This government is well aware of the strong links between crime and the use and misuse of illegal drugs. Many people—unfortunately, many young people—become addicted to drugs and turn to crime to fund their increasingly expensive habit. It is a vicious and soul-destroying cycle. The best way to break this cycle is to get in early and help people stop using drugs.

The Queensland illicit drug diversion initiative recently announced by the Premier is just one of the important programs initiated by our government. It gives people who are caught using drugs the chance to undertake treatment rather than getting caught up in the criminal justice system. It is not a soft option; it gives them one chance to undergo rehabilitation. The major element of this initiative is a police diversion program for offenders caught with a minor amount of cannabis—50 grams or less—for personal use. Violent offenders and those dealing in drugs are not eligible for these programs. Along with the drug court program, this initiative gives people a chance for rehabilitation and an important opportunity to break the drug cycle.

Our whole-of-government approach to the drug issue is an acknowledgment that there is no quick fix. It is an approach based on three key strategies—education, treatment for drug dependency and law enforcement. We start in the schools, where education programs and support staff are available to our young people to provide valuable assistance at a time when they may be tempted by or offered drugs.

For those who find themselves in the drug cycle, our diversion approach gives them a second chance before they face tough penalties and jail sentences. The drug court trial at Beenleigh, Ipswich and Southport provides an alternative to prison—a chance for rehabilitation. If the objectives of the drug court trial are achieved, we will see a reduction in both drug dependency and the resources required for jailing offenders. This is an important and valuable program and involves a whole range of people and agencies, including magistrates, the Premier's Department, the Justice Department, Legal Aid Queensland, Queensland Health, the Department of Corrective Services, the Department of Housing, the Department of Families and the Queensland Police Service.

There is no question about making the effort; our government is determined to do everything it can to prevent the spread of drugs and the illegal use of drugs. At the same time, it is putting in place the strongest possible measures against those who sell drugs. The justice system already applies tough penalties for those who traffic in drugs. We are committed to more police—a thousand over the next three years—and a range of programs outlined by the Police Minister to target drugs and the crime that drug addiction leads to.

The issue of drugs and the problems they cause in our society is one that our government is tackling like no other government before it. The Minister for Health mentioned the Positive Parenting

Program that is in place. During the previous parliament, I was happy to have the minister open a Positive Parenting Program in my electorate at the Palmdale Community Health Centre. Parents have told me about the many great benefits from that program.

Many schools in my electorate are crying out for an expansion of the School Nurse Program. Why are they crying out for it? Because they know of its success. I am happy to say that one of the biggest schools in my electorate, Mansfield High, will receive the benefits of that program in an expanded admin block. This is a grassroots attack on the drug problem. It is a whole-of-government approach, a holistic approach, that needs to be undertaken to tackle the drug problem.

There is no quick fix, and I do not think that anyone in this House thinks there is. It is important to adopt a holistic approach rather than use a big stick. I am proud of this government's commitment to ensuring that we tackle the drug problem. I hope that all members will support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General.
