



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 8 November 2001

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Drug Courts**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: Today I would like to talk about success stories—success stories of the very best kind. I am referring to the Drug Court trial, and I am pleased to inform the House that there have been two more Drug Court graduations.

The Drug Court gives offenders a chance to put an end to their drug habit and their criminal activity, which is good for them and the community as a whole. These latest graduations are significant indicators of the success of this important program. Obviously, it would not be proper for me to disclose their identity, as these two graduates have asked not to be named. Understandably, they want to get on with their life with some anonymity. However, I want to offer my congratulations and good wishes for the future. There is still a very tough road ahead.

Both of these men have graduated from the Beenleigh Drug Court after having been on the program for 11 months and 14 months respectively. The first of the graduates was referred to the Drug Court in October last year. He appeared on break and enter charges, resisting arrest and forgery. This 28-year-old was determined to reclaim a life taken over by addiction to heroin and experimentation with a range of other dangerous drugs. It was a life where crime paid for his drug habit.

After being referred to the Drug Court rehabilitation program, he made rapid progress with no breaches of his intensive drug rehabilitation order, graduating after eleven months of treatment. Today, this young man has his best chance ever of beginning his life all over again. He is currently employed and is working on rebuilding his relationship with his partner and daughter.

The other graduate is a 48-year-old father of three who appeared in the Drug Court in July 2000. He was referred on a charge of receiving and was addicted to heroin. For the duration of the program he was an outpatient and now, after 14 months, has kicked the habit. He is now free of drugs and, although unemployed, is undergoing retraining to help him get a job.

When a person finishes the Drug Court rehabilitation program, the magistrate reviews the original sentence and takes into account their success and participation in the program. Because of their successful rehabilitation, both of the Beenleigh graduates have been resentenced to terms of parole rather than imprisonment. There are currently a further 16 people in the final phases of their Drug Court rehabilitation programs. This is a self-paced program and every day has its challenges, so it is not possible to advise members if and when these people will graduate.

The Drug Court trial was established by our government in June last year at Beenleigh, Southport and Ipswich Magistrates Courts.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation.

**Mr WELFORD:** There are widespread benefits for the community in breaking the cycle of crime from drugs. That is why we initiated the Drug Court trial. Our government believes this trial is worth pursuing; in fact, we are currently planning for an expansion to Cairns and Townsville. Anyone who has contact with drug addiction and has seen the way it destroys lives will applaud these success stories and wish these latest Drug Court graduates every success for the future.