



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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DRUG STRATEGY

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (6.54 p.m.): It is a sad indictment on our modern society that today's youth is probably the first generation who has no hope of exceeding the expectations or the achievements of their parents. That lack of hope leaves them with a huge self-esteem problem and leads them to being drawn into such things as the horrors of drugs and drug addiction.

We must do everything that we possibly can to prevent our young people from falling into the trap of drug addiction and resorting to drugs. We must start with an education program; we must intervene early and let them know that it is not okay to do drugs. For those kids that it is too late for, we must work hard to get them off the drugs. We must provide the facilities and the ability for those kids to get off the drugs where and when they want to get off them.

Once we get them off the drugs, we have to keep them off. We have to do everything that we possibly can to keep them off. But most of all, we have to get the pushers off the streets. We have to get tough on those people who are peddling death to our kids every day in every street around this state.

As the member for Callide said, it is very easy for the government members to sit here and sprout rhetoric, but we must match that rhetoric with action. We have to put all of the good deeds to work, and we must make sure that we do not say that what we have done for the past three years is good enough, because clearly it is not good enough. You do not have to be in Brisbane, you do not have to be on the Gold Coast, you do not have to be in Cairns or Townsville to see what the drug problem is; you can go to virtually any country town, any regional centre, any major provincial city, or any metropolitan area to see what the ravages of drugs are doing to our kids and our society.

It is ironic that just this very week senior members of the ALP have been publicly advocating safe injecting rooms to make it easier for our kids to go and inject hard drugs while at the very same time this week, in this parliament, we have seen legislation introduced to make it harder to smoke tobacco and normal cigarettes. What sort of messages are those conflicting points of view sending?

It is good to see in this motion that has been moved that there is a clear and unambiguous position not to legalise safe injecting rooms and not to legalise marijuana or any other drug. But what we need to do is have a consistent view right across all parties and from within the senior parts of the Labor Party—whom we have seen this week advocating those things—so that it is clearly a bipartisan attack on drugs and that we will do everything that we possibly can do to take them off our streets. Will this public advocacy by the mayor, for example, lead to a lobby to legalise marijuana? The problems with marijuana are widespread. We have to combat the message that it is okay to try marijuana, that it is a harmless drug, because it is not a harmless drug.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr COPELAND: It is not a harmless drug; it is exacerbating all sorts of things such as mental illness—

Mr Springborg: There are a lot of people in the government who say that it doesn't.

Mr COPELAND: That is right. A lot of people within the government and within the Labor Party say that it is okay and that we should be looking at legalising marijuana. I am glad to see in this motion that it is clearly stated that that will not happen. But we have to make sure that the messages coming out are clear and unambiguous: that it is not okay to do marijuana. The psychoses, the mental illness problems that have been exacerbated by the use of marijuana, are quite clear.

Miss Simpson interjected.

Mr COPELAND: The cancer, as the shadow minister for health reminds me. It affects personality, it affects the ability to deal with life and, for the vast majority of people who go on to use harder drugs, they start with marijuana. It does not necessarily follow that if you use marijuana you will go on to use harder drugs, but the vast majority of people who do go on to use harder drugs started with using marijuana.

What message does it send when, on the one hand, we are saying that drugs are bad, drugs kill and drugs are not good and, on the other hand, we have people like the Lord Mayor saying, 'They will kill only if you don't use them where we reckon that it is okay for you to use them'? There must be a multifaceted attack with education, rehabilitation and compassion, and detention and punishment for those people who are pushing the drugs. We have to focus especially on juvenile detoxification and make sure that there are facilities available right across the state so that when a young person gets the urge—no matter whether it is 1 o'clock in the afternoon or 12 o'clock at night—they can access those juvenile detoxification units and get help to address the problem that they have recognised that they have with drugs and not be told, 'Come back in about a month and maybe we will have a place for you,' and be sent away. We also have to have those juvenile detoxification centres right across the state, and not just concentrated in metropolitan Brisbane or on the Gold Coast.

Time expired.
