



Speech by

# STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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## REGIONAL DRUG DETOXIFICATION FACILITIES

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (7.31 p.m.): I would like to draw attention to an impassioned account in Monday's Toowoomba *Chronicle* of a mother's battle with her two sons' addiction to heroin. In the article, the mother emotionally describes how neither she nor her husband were truly prepared for the battle that lay ahead in their attempt to detox and rehabilitate their sons in a regional city.

There are no residential detox facilities in Toowoomba and rehabilitation services are at full capacity. So the mother faced the reality of detoxing her children at home using the outpatient facility. Due to her lack of expertise in and understanding of such a process, it was, in her words, a totally unrealistic expectation. She lamented that at this most vulnerable of times, the all too vital support from available sources was simply not forthcoming.

Her example is by no means isolated and highlights the very significant problem of people dealing with drug addiction in regional areas. Adequate facilities are just not available in Toowoomba for residential detoxification and rehabilitation. While outpatients services are available, in reality residential facilities are far better able to remove the young person from their old, damaging environment and provide structure with trained staff to lead them properly to recovery. Organisations such as Drug Arm and Teen Challenge are doing a wonderful job in the community, but they are stretched to the limit with only restricted available funds. With increased funding, these groups could extend their vital programs.

The Minister for Health will say that the government is assisting Teen Challenge in its residential program towards a long-term goal of 32 beds and providing support for a handful of other groups to provide outpatient assistance. Sadly, this support is only a drop in the ocean and goes nowhere near addressing the drug crisis in Toowoomba. Currently, Teen Challenge can accommodate only a maximum of 12 to 14 males in their residential facility. For female addicts the situation is worse, with absolutely no facilities available for residential rehabilitation. I find these facts unbelievable for a city of 90,000 people.

It may surprise some people that each year in Toowoomba approximately 12 people die from drug-related causes while every week there are two to three drug overdoses in the city. Between 1988 and 1998 heroin use jumped by a massive 77 per cent in regional communities. If current trends continue, regional cities such as Toowoomba will be faced with the same epidemic situation that exists currently in Brisbane by 2008.

This trend is of great concern to families all over Queensland. Everyone in the community is affected by drug addiction, whether that is through being a victim of crime resulting from an addict maintaining their habit or through losing a loved one because of an overdose. It is in the community that action must be taken. If the Health Minister is serious about addressing the growing drug problem, I implore her to start listening to the demands of regional areas and dedicate sufficient funds towards creating adequate facilities, which is just one part of the multifaceted strategy that is needed to combat this problem right across Queensland.

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