



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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DRUG LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (5.01 pm): I commend the Attorney-General for the amendments to the act which will allow drug courts to become permanent. I must say that, of the many members here, I would perhaps be one of the only ones who sat on the bench in another life. In that role you have to impose imprisonment on another person. I worked under a regime that was introduced by the National Party whereby people were given a custodial sentence for driving whilst disqualified. That was in the mid-seventies. The disqualification was for the misuse of another drug. As members would all be aware, you lost your licence for drink-driving.

It is a harrowing experience to have to send another person to jail. The drug courts have allowed people to be diverted into programs which, in fact, care for their future and, in actual fact, allow them to move on with their own lives, provided they comply with court orders.

No members here support drugs in any way, shape or form. They are a blight upon society and cause misery and hardship among many people, from the highest to the lowest levels of our society. However, once people are hooked by drugs, they seem unable to do anything at all to help themselves while they are in the clutches of the people who provide drugs. The drug courts—although initially they were only experimental—have shown that they can divert people and give people another option.

One major concern for people who are involved with drugs is that it is not just drug use that causes a blight on their lives. Many people who are into the drug scene suffer very badly from imprisonment which can be imposed because their drug use leads them to commit theft, break and enter, and crimes of dishonesty. These people need to acquire money to purchase drugs. At least if they come before the Drug Court these people are offered an alternative, another avenue to resurrect their lives.

I commend the Attorney-General and the attorneys before her who were far-sighted enough to introduce courts which allow people to undergo rehabilitation programs and to work hard to rehabilitate themselves from the scourge of drugs.

I must express some amazement in relation to drug use. I spoke to the Attorney-General yesterday and she indicated in relation to the use of marijuana in Queensland that the average age that people start to use is 14.7 years. For some of the heavier drugs, the average age that people start to use is 18 and 19.

If people in their formative years believe that they can try a drug but then they become hooked, they should not spend the rest of their lives paying for that with periods of imprisonment. Rather, they could undergo the intervention and diversion that the drug courts provide to people generally.

There have been 170 successful graduates, if you can call graduates from a court system 'successful'. There have been 170 graduates who have not reoffended. Recidivism is very low, compared to recidivism for other crimes.

I extend my whole-hearted support to the Attorney-General's advances in drug treatment or drug assistance, and I commend the bill to the House.