Speech by

Dr Bruce Flegg

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard Wednesday, 10 October 2007

NEEDLE AND SYRINGE PROGRAM

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (11.41 am): This morning in question time I tabled a photograph of a Queensland government health centre which was unattended and had syringes for anyone who wanted to come and take them. Is it any wonder that our parks and beaches are littered with dangerous, used syringes? This is not an exchange of needles. This is simply a handing out of needles. To make matters worse, not only was there no counselling, no adviser, no education, no help to get off drugs and no prevention work, there was not even a message on the bags of syringes with a phone number to call for help. The only message on the bags was one which invited people who were picking up their packets of free syringes to go to a seminar on how to do graffiti. I table that notification.

Tabled paper: Copy of a flyer headed 'Live and Aware'.

There is no question whatsoever that this is simply glamorising drug taking. It is saying that it is cool, it is savvy. What we are meant to be doing is helping these people. We should be aiming to prevent drug abuse. For those who tragically get sucked into it, we should be aiming to rehabilitate them. Sure, we need to minimise harm but it needs to be done in a responsible way that does not simply facilitate and glorify drug taking.

If we want to minimise harm, one thing that could have been done with these packages or in these health centres is disease testing. Hepatitis B is rampant in this country, particularly among drug users, and we have a problem with AIDS. Let us screen people and counsel them when they exchange their syringes. We on this side of the House want to see an exchange of syringes where used ones are returned rather than being tipped on our beaches and parks. They would then be supplied with new syringes in association with counselling, disease testing and, when the moment is right, assistance for them to get off the drugs. It is the support and the help that is needed.

Time expired.