



Speech by

**Karen Struthers**

**MEMBER FOR ALGESTER**

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## **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (12.26 pm): In supporting the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to canvass two issues in the bill—the ban on the sale of ice pipes and the focus on the rights of victims of crimes committed by people with mental health problems. Ice is a synthetic, stimulant drug, a methamphetamine that has become a drug of choice sadly for thousands of people with dire consequences. Ice hit the streets in Australia in the late 1990s. Since then, many minilabs have been detected around Queensland, particularly in the south-east part of Queensland, and big shipments have been detected at Australia's borders. I certainly want to commend the Queensland police for the way they have identified and detected these labs and shut them down in many areas. They have certainly been diligent in their work.

The focus on the ban of ice pipes is but one strategy that is needed in a very broad range of strategies to deal with this massive problem of methamphetamine use. I want to pick up on one of the points of the member for Surfers Paradise and the praise he lavished on the former federal parliamentary secretary for health, Christopher Pyne. I was at the national forum on ice representing the Queensland minister, the Hon. Stephen Robertson. Let me tell members what Christopher Pyne did at that meeting. He left the meeting after about an hour. He ducked outside, powdered his nose and forehead and did a media conference. We had only been together for an hour. It was a national forum convened and initiated by the Labor government of New South Wales, so I guess he was there fairly reluctantly anyway. But he ducked out after about an hour, powdered his nose, went to the media conference and announced that all Australian states and territories should ban ice pipes. He had not done his homework. A number of states and territories either had the bans in place or, like us, were well on the way to doing that.

Christopher Pyne did not go out there and announce \$100 million or \$200 million for more rehabilitation and treatment services. He did not go out there and announce the federal government's commitment to supporting people and families affected by this drug. He did not go out there and call for state and territory cooperation and say, 'Let's work together with the feds to deal with this massive drug problem.' He powdered his nose and went out there and did a media stunt on banning ice pipes. That is one small strategy on this war on drugs. That is the federal government commitment, and the member for Surfers Paradise has unfairly lavished praise on this former parliamentary secretary, who is now sadly the Minister for Ageing. That was his commitment.

I think we need to get this into perspective. At a state level we have done a number of things to tackle this problem and related drug problems—and I will talk shortly about the Ice-Breaker Strategy—but it is a big problem. I think the CMC's reports of December 2006 and February 2007 reported that 9.9 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds in Queensland have used amphetamines and 12.8 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds. Most users are polydrug users—cannabis, speed, ice; the whole lot. It is a big problem and we certainly need to do something about it.

Nationally it has been estimated that 73,000 people are addicted to methamphetamine and, unlike heroin, there has been a very limited development of treatment services specific for methamphetamine. That is the issue. Christopher Pyne should not have gone out to the media to do a stunt. He should not have left the meeting in the first place, because there were very important issues to be discussed, but he

should have announced hundreds of millions of dollars for treatment services. That is what is needed. That is the real support that we need at a state level. We need more money for our hospitals and our treatment services around the state to deal with this problem.

One of the problems that we did discuss at that meeting is that, when people are under the influence of methamphetamine, like ice, they often present at hospitals very violent and aggressive. We have an issue where our staff are having to deal with these people who are very difficult to manage. We need to provide more support to staff in Queensland health services around the state.

There are something like 500 tobacconists in Queensland who have been displaying and selling the utensils used to make ice pipes. In Queensland under the Drugs Misuse Act it is an offence to possess an ice pipe that has been used for the consumption of ice, and this bill will seek to prohibit the sale as well as the commercial display and supply of ice pipes. In addition, the bill will also replace section 26ZQ of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act, which will make it an offence for a person to produce, sell or publicly display a cannabis utensil commonly known as a bong. Retailers have known how to get around the law for a long time. It has been fairly simple for them. You simply disassemble the parts of a bong and it is no longer a bong. After this legislation is passed, that will certainly not be possible.

Again, I go back to my friend Christopher Pyne. We called on him to ban the importation of ice pipes, and he was baulking and being awkward about that. I really want to be very clear in my message today: these are very serious national problems. This problem of ice and other related drugs is a very serious problem which is having a significant impact on young people. Again, at that national forum on ice we had young people there. If you want to call a 40-plus-person young, as I would, we had a 40-plus-year-old man there talking about his long-term drug use and the detrimental effect that had on his life, his career, his relationships and his family. It is a massive problem. We need serious cooperation at the federal level. We need support through hospital funding and treatment services.

I am a cracked record. I have said that over and over again today and in other forums, and I will repeat that message. Let us get serious and work together with the Commonwealth. There are some good national initiatives, but let us have fewer of these stunts and more action from our federal colleagues.

The other issue I wanted to raise in relation to this bill is that of the changes following the Brendan Butler report. Balancing the rights of victims of crime and people with forensic mental health problems is a significant problem that we have had to deal with. I am very proud to say that the Beattie government and the former Goss Labor government in Queensland have a proud record of promoting the rights of and services provided to victims of crime. I commend Minister Stephen Robertson for continuing this proud tradition with the initiatives that we are seeing introduced through this bill.

This bill strengthens the role of victims in the forensic mental health system. I go back in time and look at our former colleagues, people like Matt Foley, for instance, who also gave a strong focus to the rights of victims. For example, in 1995 as Attorney-General the Hon. Matt Foley introduced the Criminal Offence Victims Bill, which contained in part 2 the fundamental principles of justice for victims of crime. These principles were designed to enhance the rights of victims without diminishing the rights of the defence and prosecution to the rigours of a fair trial. This legislation also reformed in part 3 the system for compensation for victims of crime. It was a Labor government that enhanced the compensation for victims of crime. It was a Labor state government in Queensland that gave a focus in the criminal justice system to the rights of victims. Let us not forget that. It has been Labor governments that can stand proud on their record in this regard.

In 1998, as Attorney-General in the Beattie government, Matt Foley also introduced reform of the Criminal Code, one aim being to ensure that the criminal justice system treats women and children fairly. As Matt Foley said at the time, they have at times been subjected to 'rougher than usual handling' by the system. That paved the way for lots of changes to occur where, although it is not perfect, women and children as victims, particularly of sexual crimes, are treated with a lot more dignity through the criminal justice system.

Again, let us get the record straight: it was not conservative governments in past times in Queensland that gave this any attention at all. In fact, we had a very strong culture of 'Let's blame the woman'. 'She asked for it.' 'The kids even asked for it.' Those were the views of some of our conservative forebears. The times thankfully have changed. We are seeing much more positive change not only in the practical application of the law but also in attitudes to victims of crime. Again, I think we can give credit to our Labor counterparts in past years for a lot of that good work.

Back to Brendan Butler: he is a good man, he had a good team working with him, he came up with really good, solid recommendations that we will be working through as a government, and we are seeing the implementation of some of those in the bill before us today. I do not want to comment in detail. I simply want to say that recommendations like those that change the definition of 'victim' in the act and expand it so that harm suffered by family members of a direct victim of a criminal offence are given some additional support and coverage are very important initiatives. I commend his work. I commend the way in which we are going about implementing those changes, and I certainly commend this bill to the House.