



Speech by

**Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

Hansard Wednesday, 20 May 2009

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## **MOTION: DRUG FREE AUSTRALIA REPORT**

**Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (6.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. I commend the member for Nicklin on the genuineness that he has exhibited in both his comments in relation to this motion and his comments in the debate yesterday on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. Clearly the member for Nicklin, unlike the opposition, recognises the great potential of the new committee structure.

The motion moved by the member for Nicklin refers the *Cannabis—suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects* research paper to the Social Development Committee for investigation and report to the House. This research paper focuses on the mental and physical risks of cannabis consumption and contains a specific consideration of the implications for young people. The research paper states that there is overwhelming evidence that the age of first cannabis use is directly connected to progression to heavier drug use.

The research paper recommends, among other things, the implementation of effective preventative drug education in schools, the resourcing of a long-term anticannabis campaign, increased penalties for the offences of supply and sale of drugs to young people, noncustodial diversion programs for young people convicted of drug offences and roadside drug testing. The research paper and its recommendations raise an important matter about cannabis use, young people and government policy responses. Currently the state government has a number of policies which are along similar lines to the recommendations made in the research paper. For instance, Education Queensland has a drug education and prevention program and from December 2007 random roadside drug testing was introduced by the state government.

The government is constantly reviewing its policies in relation to other substances including tobacco. For instance, the review of Queensland's tobacco laws was recently conducted with a particular focus on the smoke-free enclosed and outdoor places provisions of the legislation. The recommendations share some similarities with those recommendations in the research paper which is the subject of this motion. Those recommendations resulted in the government in 2008 announcing a ban on smoking in cars with children under the age of 16 years and a transfer of power to local governments to regulate smoking at pedestrian malls and at public transport waiting points. Also, Quit Smoking mass media campaigns and the Quitline service are in place to encourage and support smokers to quit.

The investigation and report by the Social Development Committee of the recommendations of the research paper will be of great benefit to the parliament and the government in analysing current policy responses to cannabis use. Irrespective of what members of the opposition stated yesterday in the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill debate about their scepticism to the changes to the structure of the parliamentary committee system, I agree with the view of the member for Nicklin that the changes are a 'definite improvement' on the previous structure. The reality is that the new committee structure provides great opportunities for new ideas to be considered and discussed and for honourable members to refer matters for investigation to the relevant committee.

The focus of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin raises an important matter about drugs—in this instance, cannabis and how governments can respond to its use. It is a testimony to the new

committee structure that members of this House are able to identify important and contemporary issues and for the House to refer those matters to the committee for investigation when possible. Of course members of the opposition do not share this total confidence in the new structure. Members opposite are inherently suspicious of this progressive, constructive and contemporary reform. But this motion and the Labor Party's support of it emphasises how misguided these suspicions are. The fact of the matter is that the new structure is a positive and progressive improvement for development of new ideas for the parliament and, in turn, for the government. I commend the member for Nicklin on his motion and I commend the motion to the House.