




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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**PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT ORDERS)
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.36 pm): The primary objective of this bill, in establishing a new sentencing option that has been referred to as the drug and alcohol treatment order for offenders whose criminal behaviour is linked to their serious drug or alcohol use, also provides changes to the Evidence Act which are relevant to domestic violence. I will firstly address the drug sentencing options.

Breaking the nexus of drug use and crime is a good policy intention which I think we all support, but how that is achieved effectively is the issue of debate—and so it should be. Drug and alcohol abuse destroys lives—not only of those using these substances but also of their families, the community and the victims of their crimes. Striving to find better and more effective ways to break the cycle of abuse is something that we as a community need to have rigorous debate and discussion about. There also needs to be transparency about what actually works and not just policy statements.

There also needs to be better education with regard to prevention. I raise a concern with respect to social commentary involving people in our entertainment industry. This cuts across all areas of our community, but those in the entertainment industry perhaps are easier to highlight because of their profile. Drug and alcohol use is almost seen as a rite of passage, as something to toss off as something they did in their youth and survived. So many have not survived. So many have been on such a destructive pathway. It is not just the individual who pays the price; it is also their families and the community. I think it is time we were really frank about the destruction in our community caused by drug abuse. People who have a high profile try to palm it off, but they should be held to account for their actions because they send a message to another generation that somehow it will be okay when it may not be. Lives are left in tatters as a result.

The LNP has a tough on crime approach, particularly with regard to drug and alcohol crime. That is one of the very real reasons we have no compunction in saying that those who peddle drugs need to face the full force of the law, and that is about ensuring that we break the nexus of addiction whilst also ensuring that those who peddle drugs are held to account. That is why we believe that those involved in criminal gangs, particularly the criminal motorcycle gangs that had such an incredibly powerful inroad into our communities and networked throughout this state, had to be held to account, and we make no apologies for that.

The legislation before the House is about diversion and, as I said, I think it has good intentions, but the issue of debate is the implementation since it was announced by Labor in 2015. It has good intentions but poor implementation because since then we have seen \$1.2 million spent on this initiative but still no Drug Court. Only in Queensland under Labor would we see money spent on an initiative with no outcomes. Labor thinks spending money is proof of outcomes. Oh, if only it was! Here we are on the eve of a possible election and its 2015 election commitment to re-establish drug courts still has not been fulfilled. There is legislation before the House that allows for diversionary orders to be made, but still there is yet to be a pilot date announced for that first Drug Court, which we are told is going to be

in Brisbane and eventually other locations. I want to see not only diversion that is successful but also transparency as to the costs, because this issue does need to be looked at as to the best and most effective ways to break that nexus between drug addiction and crime throughout our community whilst also ensuring that those peddling drugs are not let off the hook, that their crimes are taken seriously and that the full weight of the law is brought against them.

I want to address the issue of alcohol interlocks. It is not part of this legislation, but I flag that it has been raised with me that this still would not necessarily capture or provide an opportunity for diversion for those who have been identified as having a major addiction. If they have an alcohol interlock that is ordered to be fitted to their vehicles, there is still no opportunity necessarily to see them effectively diverted into drug diversion programs. I flag that because it has been raised with me and I think that we are talking about mechanisms that we have supported across this chamber—that is, alcohol interlocks as a mechanism to keep drug affected people out of their cars. There also has to be the opportunity for diversion to break some of those lifetime addictions and I think that that is something relevant to raise at this point.

The other issue included in this legislation relates to the Evidence Act with respect to domestic violence offences. As my colleague the member for Caloundra outlined, it is quite a distressing and confronting situation for victims of domestic violence to find themselves not only having to go through the criminal court process with their offenders potentially facing off against them but also in a situation where they are vulnerable in that court setting. This Evidence Act amendment is to ensure that an alleged victim of an offence against section 315A—that is, 'Choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting'—of the Criminal Code is afforded appropriate protection in court proceedings. It has been alluded to that this is a provision that should have been addressed earlier when other substantial changes to domestic violence provisions were before the House, but certainly it is good to see this here now because, ultimately, we want to ensure that not only are there just outcomes in the court case but also there is an understanding of the vulnerability of victims when they are facing a situation where the criminal court process is one that can be a revictimisation for people who have suffered so much.