




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.31 pm): I am pleased to support the Penalties and Sentences (Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. The bill delivers on the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to reintroduce the Drug Court, which was thoughtlessly axed by the Newman-Nicholls government despite evidence showing it to be a success. This bill, which re-establishes the Drug Court and introduces treatment orders as a sentencing option, represents the smart-on-crime approach adopted by this government, addressing both criminal offending and the underlying causes of criminal offending.

The newly re-established Drug Court will insert a new sentencing option into the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 that will allow a treatment order to be placed on offenders whose criminal behaviour is directly linked to severe drug or alcohol use. The Drug Court will address drug related crime by tackling the addiction behind the offence to effectively break the cycle of criminal behaviour and to help make our communities safer.

The Palaszczuk government's election commitment to provide drug and alcohol diversionary processes and programs for offenders has already seen the Queensland Integrated Court Referrals program established in five locations across Queensland and has delivered the rollout of the Murri Court in 14 locations across the state. In this year's state budget \$22.7 million has been allocated over four years for the re-establishment of the Drug Court program. The operation of the Drug Court will be based in Brisbane, with court referral and support services to be established in Brisbane, Ipswich, Southport and Cairns.

I am delighted to see the Drug Court program rolled out in the Ipswich region. In the past five years, sadly, Ipswich has experienced a spike in drug related offences. In 2012 Ipswich recorded a total of 1,208 drug offences whereas in 2017 a total of 2,977 drug offences were recorded between January and September—an increase of over 140 per cent compared with 2012. In the last five years Ipswich has seen an increase in rates of property theft and weapons offences, and there is an urgent need in the community for a wider range of sentencing options which provide treatment for the underlying causes of crime such as drug and alcohol addiction. This will help keep our crime rates down and guarantee a safer community for Ipswich residents. I take this opportunity to thank the local police in Ipswich who do an extraordinary job every single day. I commend district Superintendent Brian Huxley for his leadership.

I wholeheartedly believe that the re-establishment of the Drug Court will have a beneficial impact on the wellbeing and safety of the Ipswich community. It will give judges a wider range of sentencing options which will balance the tough, punitive approaches to sentencing with rehabilitative approaches that treat the underlying causes of criminal behaviour.

Re-establishing the Drug Court is a smart and cost-effective approach to dealing with crime in Queensland. In a comprehensive review of Queensland's former drug court program, the final report noted that the court delivered a number of cost related and social benefits to the community including reductions in drug use and associated health issues, easing the burden these offenders place on the health system, the reunification of families, babies born drug-free, the retention of stable accommodation, engagement of offenders in employment, education and training, and a reduction in offending.

As some of my colleagues have already said, the Queensland Law Society in its support of the re-established Drug Court identified the negative impacts the LNP government's abolition of the program had on the most vulnerable members of the community, claiming that its repeal did not crack down hard on the hardcore drug traffickers but, instead, the repeal affected vulnerable and marginalised members of the community such as women, children, Indigenous Australians and people chronically addicted to drugs.

A solely punitive approach to criminal behaviour, one favoured by the LNP government, does not address the underlying addictions that cause the offending behaviour. It is not a smart solution to crime in Queensland. The new sentencing option of treatment orders integrates tough punitive and rehabilitative elements that deal with the offender's criminal behaviour and the offender's chronic substance use. It allows the court to punish behaviour, in line with community expectations, and to treat the addictions causing antisocial behaviour.

As part of the punitive approach the court will record a conviction and sentence the offender to a term of imprisonment of up to four years, suspended for a designated period up to five years. As part of its rehabilitative approach the offender will be required to undergo an intensive treatment program and comply with a range of conditions for a minimum of two years. It is not a soft or easy way out for offenders. Once an offender consents to a treatment order they must comply with medical, psychiatric and psychological treatment, undertake frequent drug or alcohol testing or participate in counselling or other rehabilitation programs.

The re-establishment of the Drug Court in Queensland and in my electorate of Ipswich and the introduction of treatment orders to sentencing options are a smarter, better way for Queensland to tackle crime, especially for communities like Ipswich. I commend the bill to the House.