



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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (4.29 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Penalties and Sentences (Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. This bill seeks to provide a new sentencing option for offenders whose criminal behaviour is as a result of serious alcohol or drug dependence. This sentencing option could be implemented by any Magistrates Court prescribed by regulation to be a Drug and Alcohol Court. The Brisbane Magistrates Court will be the pilot test case for this program, which will be reviewed in 2018. An economic evaluation would then assess where other drug courts would operate in the future.

The principal aim of this legislation is to facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders by providing a judicially supervised, therapeutically oriented and integrated treatment regime to reduce the offender's severe substance use disorder, reduce the level of criminal activity associated with the disorder and assist the offender's integration into the community. A treatment order will only be issued if certain conditions are met such as that the offence is the result of the substance addiction and the offender agrees to the order being made.

We are all too aware of the cost of substance abuse to our communities including crime, assaults, antisocial behaviour, domestic violence, broken families—and the list goes on. As members of parliament it is our responsibility to do all we are able to battle the scourge of drugs in our communities. This is no easy task. I have attended court to support someone very dear to me who had a drug addiction and found themselves facing charges as a result. He was convicted, received a large fine and was discharged from court. There was no offer of support to help break this addiction. He was expected to give up the drugs, get a job and pay off this large fine and reintegrate himself into society with no offer of support. He was lucky: I was there to support him. He was determined to win this battle and he did, but it was not easy. For those who have a drug addiction, particularly to a drug such as ice, without a vast amount of support to help kick their addiction more will fail than will succeed.

Quite often the alcohol or drug addiction is the symptom and not the disease. Many suffer from depression, anxiety or other mental health issues and turn to substances to cope. If this underlying problem is not addressed as part of the rehabilitation process then the chance of returning to substance abuse is very high. We should not forget the families of those who fall victim to substance abuse. Watching a loved one battle the demons of substance abuse is one of the most traumatic experiences it is possible to endure.

I support this legislation as another tool to battle the scourge of substance abuse in our society. There is no single answer to this problem, but the battle must continue.