




Speech By
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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Drugs, Testing

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (2.12 pm): I rise to speak about the lives of our young people lost to drug overdose in this state and how as a parliament we have a responsibility to do all we can to save those young lives. I want to start by saying that I wish people did not take drugs, but with more people dying from drug overdoses than on our roads that is obviously not dealing with reality. In this House we need to deal with the real-life experiences of the families we are elected to serve. We may like to think that young drug users are other people's children, but there are very few families that drug use has not touched. If that is your family then you are very lucky.

As a doctor I worked for the state government's alcohol and drug services, working with heroin users in harm reduction measures. I sat with families of young people who attended the best private schools in this state with parents from the highest echelons of professional life, all driven by the desire to save their children—in some cases, all of their children—from the devastating effects of drug use. Sometimes on a really basic level what is required is to keep young people alive long enough to get them through a period of experimentation so they can go on and lead the rich, productive lives we all want for them.

That is why harm reduction measures like drug testing are so important, particularly at this time with two deaths in the past few weeks from a new, potent opioid and schoolies coming up. Drug testing services save lives, with many young people who attend reducing their drug use or not taking the drug at all as well as receiving help with addiction and mental health problems. The president of AMA Queensland has said—

We know from pill testing, from worldwide research and evidence, it does save lives.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners supports drug testing services as a sensible harm reduction measure, stating it is not about condoning illegal drug use but about helping people who are taking illicit drugs make an informed decision. The Queensland branch of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists has called for the reversal of Queensland's legislation banning drug-checking services.

Strong governments have the courage to admit when they have got something wrong. I ask the government not to turn their back on Queensland families who need our help but to have the strength to show leadership. Listen to the experts—listen to the doctors, to the GPs, to the psychiatrists—and reinstate drug testing services in this state for the sake of our young Queenslanders and their families.