

**Question on Notice
No. 879
Asked on 25 May 2006**

MS ATTWOOD asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE) -

QUESTION:

Will she provide a progress report on the “banning of spray cans” business trial being conducted by the Queensland Police Service in the Oxley District?

ANSWER:

The “Spray Safe” Project was commenced within the Oxley Police District on 1 November 2005. The aim of the project is to reduce the incidence of Volatile Substance Misuse (VSM) within the Oxley District. It was not designed to achieve or promote the wholesale banning of the sale of spray cans.

VSM is of widespread concern within the Brisbane Metropolitan area. Community groups, retailers, government agencies and the families of individuals engaged in this practice struggle to understand why young people participate in such a practice, how to limit the availability of the products concerned, and most importantly how to protect and rehabilitate the individuals involved.

The prevention and reduction of VSM is not the sole domain of law enforcement; rather it is a social issue involving the whole community. Frustration within the community is particularly evident when chronic users are unable to be deterred from further use or fail to avail themselves of realistic detoxification opportunities.

In an endeavour to address these concerns, the aims of the project being trialled in Oxley Police District are to:

1. Educate retail management/owners regarding their legal obligations to refuse to supply volatile substances to persons suspected of inhaling, or to individuals suspected of purchasing substances for the purpose of on-selling for inhaling. Retailers failing to do this commit an offence against Section 23 of the *Summary Offences Act 2005* (Sale of Potentially Harmful Things);
2. Identify individuals who frequently purchase volatile substances for the purpose of on-selling to other persons for the purpose of inhaling;
3. Prosecute retailers found committing offences against Section 23 of the *Summary Offences Act*;
4. Identify individuals affected by VSM in public places; and
5. Refer individuals involved in VSM to community agencies for education and diversion programs.

Approximately 28 of the 35 retailers who sell spray paint cans within the District have agreed to take part in the project.

Those retailers have had a security audit of their premises and have received education and advice regarding their responsibilities under Section 23 of the *Summary Offences Act 2005*.

The retailers have also maintained a register of individuals who purchase paint from their store.

Police undertake regular inspections of registers and refer persons at risk of VSM for appropriate follow up and intervention.

In the first instance, the individual is provided with a referral card. Police Liaison Officers follow up by visiting the person's address to seek the individual's consent to forward their details to an appropriate referral agency.

Oxley District Police received 25 calls for service regarding VSM between 1 November 2005 and 31 March 2006. There were 49 calls for service relating to VSM for the same comparative period of 1 November 2004 to 31 March 2005. This represents a 49% reduction in VSM calls for service within the Oxley Police District since the project commenced.

Project posters have been distributed for display in retail outlets to promote the project. 300 posters and 20,000 referral cards have been produced for distribution. Referral cards have been distributed to all police stations within the Oxley Police District.

At this stage of the project, all participating retailers appear to be complying with the requirements of Section 23 of the *Summary Offences Act 2005*.

The project will conclude on 30 June 2007.