

Answer Question on Notice

No. 116

Asked on Thursday 8 February 2007

Ms STONE asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister assisting the Premier in Western Queensland (Mr Shine) -

QUESTION:

Will he outline the role of the Drug Court and how successful is the Drug Court Program?

ANSWER:

The Drug Court operates in five Magistrates Court jurisdictions in Queensland: Beenleigh, Ipswich and Southport in Southeast Queensland, and Townsville and Cairns in the North.

The role of the Drug Court is to achieve five target goals. They are:

- to reduce the level of drug dependency in the community and the drug dependency of eligible persons;
- to reduce the level of criminal activity associated with drug dependency;
- to reduce the health risks associated with drug dependency of eligible persons;
- to promote the rehabilitations of eligible persons and their re-integration into the community; and
- to reduce the pressure on resources in the court and prison systems.

Evaluations of the Drug Court undertaken to date have been very encouraging. Participants are regularly drug tested, and successful progression through the program is dependent on consistent negative test results. The Australian Institute of Criminology has evaluated separately both the Southeast Queensland and North Queensland programs. The Southeast Queensland evaluation concluded that the drug court program significantly reduces re-offending rates. The North Queensland evaluation data also exhibited a similar trend. This evaluation also included a health progress component, and confirmed an improvement in health indicators when pre-program and post-program comparisons were made for program graduates.

In June 2006, on the basis of the positive outcomes reported in these evaluations, and in accordance with the Government's commitment to continue to address the issue of illicit drug use in the community, the programs offered by the drug court pilots in both the North and Southeast corner were made permanent sentencing options for the courts in which drug courts had been operating.

As at 31 January 2007, a total of 209 offenders have successfully completed the intensive program imposed and supervised by the Queensland Drug Courts, reducing the pressure on the Queensland prison system by 287.6 prisoner years.