

Question on Notice

No. 163

Asked on Tuesday, 20 February 2007

Mrs SCOTT asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland (Mr Shine) -

QUESTION:

- (1) How successful has the Drug Court Program been?
- (2) Will he give figures pertaining to the Beenleigh Court for the above program?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Drug Court has been operating in South East Queensland since June 2000, and in North Queensland since November 2002. The key aims are to reduce the level of criminal activity associated with drug dependency, to reduce the health risks associated with drug dependency; and to reduce the pressure on court and prison systems. The Drug Court has been independently evaluated by the Australian Institute of Criminology, which concluded that graduates of the program have significantly reduced re-offending rates, and where re-offences did occur, the average time taken to re-offend was longer than that for the comparison groups. A separate evaluation of the Drug Court in Northern Queensland included a health component which confirmed an improvement in health indicators of those who successfully completed the program.

As at 31 January 2007, a total of 209 offenders have successfully completed intensive drug rehabilitation orders as an alternative to imprisonment, reducing the pressure on the Queensland prison system by 287.6 prisoner years. **Savings and benefits to the community result from the avoidance of families being pulled apart by addiction and incarceration, improved health amongst graduates, reduced risk of spread of blood borne disease, and less reoffending.**

- (2) Since June 2000, the Beenleigh Drug Court has admitted 253 offenders to Intensive Drug Rehabilitation Orders. Up until 31 January 2007, 67 offenders have successfully graduated from the program, which can take up to two years of intense intervention to complete. There are currently 44 persons on the Drug Court program in Beenleigh. **Those graduates now have the opportunity to continue their lives without drug dependency and the criminal activity needed to sustain that habit**

The drug court program is an intensive rehabilitative sentencing option aimed at reducing drug dependency and ensuring that graduates can contribute to their full potential in our communities.