

Question on Notice

No. 252

Asked on Thursday, 22 February 2007

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

QUESTION:

What successes have there been with the Drug Court Program, particularly at the Southern Districts Magistrates Court?

ANSWER:

The Drug Court is offered in five Queensland Magistrates' courts. Cairns and Townsville in the north, and in the southeast corner of the State, Southport, Ipswich and Southern Districts, which is situated at Beenleigh. Among the key aims of the Drug Court 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 28 February 2007, a total of 212 offenders have successfully completed intensive drug rehabilitation orders as an alternative to imprisonment statewide, reducing the pressure on the Queensland prison system by 292.5 prisoner years. Additional benefits to the community because of the Drug Court include: reduced risk of the spread of blood borne diseases, and decreased incidence of families being affected by addiction and incarceration.

Since June 2000, the Southern Districts Drug Court has admitted 258 offenders to Intensive Drug Rehabilitation Orders, which can take up to two years of intense intervention to complete. Up until 28 February 2007, 69 offenders have successfully graduated from the program there, reducing the pressure on the prisons by 95.5 prisoner years. As at 1 March 2007, 44 persons subject to an intensive drug rehabilitation order were being supervised by the Southern Districts Drug Court.