

Question on Notice

No. 84

Asked on 5 February 2020

MS S BOLTON ASKED DEPUTY PREMIER, TREASURER AND MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS (HON J TRAD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) report on Imprisonment and Recidivism, which proposed that the first step to illicit drug reform should be to decriminalise the use and possession of lower harm drugs such as cannabis and MDMA, followed by expanding health support and drug treatment services—

Will the Deputy Premier explain why the proposal for the decriminalisation component has been rejected by the government?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is committed to reducing the harmful impacts of illicit drug use on the Queensland community. As detailed in the Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) response, the Queensland Government has no intention of altering any drug laws in Queensland. In recent years, the Government commitment to reducing the harmful impacts of illicit drug use has been demonstrated through initiatives such as:

- Establishing (from January 2018) the Drug and Alcohol Court Queensland which targets adult offenders with severe drug and alcohol use directly associated with their offending, to be supervised and undertake treatment with the goal of reducing future offending.
- Action on ice: The Queensland Government's plan to address use and harm caused by crystal methamphetamine which supports diversion of minor or moderate illicit drug offenders from the criminal justice system for assessment, education and treatment through intervention programs.

These approaches are underpinned by the understanding that health-based responses to drug use are a critical part of addressing potential harm. This is reflective of a broader evolution in the way governments across Australia and further afield are now responding to illicit drug use.

The Queensland Government is committed to further developing health-based approaches to illicit drug use, including through progressing:

- Development of a therapeutic health and rehabilitation model for the new Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct prison

- Foundation initiatives included in the *Action on ice* plan such as:
 - Supporting families involved in the child protection system to overcome ice issues
 - Enhancing the capacity of the Alcohol and Drug Information Service by:
 - Expanding regional services provided by Family Drug Support
 - Delivering more training and resources to frontline services
 - Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop community-led responses to ice and other drugs of concern
 - Establishing a new 42-bed residential care service in Brisbane for high-risk young people in out-of-home care to provide intensive support for their complex needs, including mental health and substance use.
- Supporting additional investment in alcohol and other drug treatment services, including:
 - increasing access to an expanded range of alcohol and other drug treatment services provided through the non-government sector
 - supporting targeted service responses in prevention, community engagement, and specialist alcohol and other drug treatment and interventions, across six Queensland Health, Hospital and Health Services.

The Queensland Government will appoint an Implementation Committee to guide delivery of its response to the QPC Inquiry. The Implementation Committee will consult with communities, stakeholders, and government agencies, and will provide practical input and advice to shape how the government progresses its response to individual recommendations and proposals of the QPC Inquiry.

The Implementation Committee will commence its work in early 2020.