

MISUSE OF DRUGS AMENDMENT (METHYLAMPHETAMINE OFFENCES) BILL 2017

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [5.14 pm]: I will resume my comments with two points. I indicated that I was not going to comment on the Misuse of Drugs Amendment (Methylamphetamine Offences) Bill 2017 but, having started, I will wrap it up fairly quickly. I am sure that members will appreciate that after my contribution there will be some very interesting members' statements. I hope that everybody will stay around to listen to what I believe will be very interesting members' statements.

In the debate on this bill it was mentioned that maybe we should target users. That got me thinking about my personal circumstances and a member of my extended family. It is a very complex issue. Somebody in my extended family used drugs and brought that chaos to his immediate family and the extended family who tried to help him. As a consequence of his drug use, he committed a crime to try to fund it and went to prison for the crime, not so much for using ice. All that did was to bring him out of prison more experienced and better trained than he was when he went in. When we come across users of ice, it is very easy to feel frustration, to feel the need for punishment and to blame the user because, of course, they made the choice to use in the first instance. It is very easy to feel that. It was very easy for me to feel that and I tend to be a fairly tolerant person. In one instance we might say, "Fantastic! Let's punish them. If we punish the user enough, then they'll stop using", but, of course, as I understand it, people use drugs in prison. Prison exposes them to other people who teach them. I agree with Hon Diane Evers that we have to try to deal with it in a compassionate way, even though it may be very difficult to do so.

This bill is well targeted but it is certainly not the whole story. I am pleased that the bill has gained support because it is a very early response being made by this government after being in office for such a short period. It was an election commitment that had community support and it has been delivered in a timely manner. But it is certainly not the whole story; it just is not. The concern about ice has been on the table for many years. In 2007, the then Premier, Hon Alan Carpenter, brought together 160 experts to give guidance on how we should deal with this issue. I believe that a number of the 28 recommendations that came out of that were implemented before he lost government. I believe that all sides of Parliament recognise this concern about ice and are working hard to try to deal with it. I will make no complaints about the last government except that the problem has not been resolved and the job needs to continue. As the government of the day, we need to take a lead in that and see whether we can resolve or substantially reduce the problem for the community during our term of government. Even though there are some criticisms about the bill—I understand that it is only a first step—I am pleased that a number of people around the chamber have expressed their willingness to support it. In government, I will do my best to ensure that further steps are taken along the line to make sure that ice does not remain as what I see as the major enemy of all reasonable constituents in this state. We have a job to do and this is the first step. I understand that the debate will go on and people will propose amendments. However, people must remember that this is the first step and that at least we have indicated to those Mr Bigs, or not-so-Mr Bigs, or whomever it is, that this will not be tolerated. This is the first step and it is a very timely step.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.