

CANNABIS LAW REFORM BILL 2009

Second Reading

Resumed from 21 April.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [1.09 pm]: To pick up where I left off, I am pleased to be supporting this piece of legislation as it goes through the house. When I concluded my remarks last time, I was talking about the positives of this bill in that it is paying particular attention to the needs of adolescents and juveniles. Some elements written into this bill take into consideration the fact that adolescents will often experiment with drugs and should not necessarily be penalised for the rest of their lives for making perhaps an immature decision to get started on drugs in the first place.

It is also really important that there is a mandatory requirement for drug education in the form of cannabis intervention sessions. In my experience in my business over time, various kids have come through our shop and shoplifted, committed graffiti offences and all sorts of things. What we found worked best with those children who offended was if they were inconvenienced by the fact that they broke the law. Having to pay a fine or have their parents cough up for a fine for a penalty for an offence such as being caught in possession of cannabis or a smoking implement is not a terrible inconvenience for children these days. Most children have access to funds and have access to parents with funds. Parents these days, sadly, often prefer to be able to write a cheque or make a credit card payment over the phone to get a fine off the slate rather than spend some time with their children to ensure that they understand exactly what the consequences might be should they break the law and also the consequences should they proceed with their foray into drugs.

I believe that the biggest failure of the previous legislation was that this drug education was not mandatory. People were not paying their fines and they were not showing up for drug education programs. That was a big flaw in the legislation. It is imperative that we compel children, adolescents and young adults who are experimenting to have the necessary education so that they can learn about some of these effects. We all know what the chronic effects of the prolonged use of cannabis appear to be, from respiratory diseases right through to the worst of the effects, psychosis and schizophrenia. There is so much information about this at the moment. It seems to me ridiculous that we are clamping down on cigarettes when there is just as much evidence out there about cannabis.

People seem to have the attitude to the drug of “let it be and chill out”. I see this as a very serious drug. As the mother of two children, I do not want my children getting into smoking cannabis. I have seen the effects of it and I have seen what it does to people. It destroys work ethic and it affects personal relationships. There is evidence at the moment that upwards of perhaps 25 per cent of the population may have a predisposition to psychosis that could be triggered by cannabis use. There is so much information about it that I believe that we need to be sending a very, very strong message that this is not a safe drug. It is not something that children can use while they hang around with their mates, chill out and relax. It is a dangerous drug. Prolonged use can cause significant health and psychological effects.

My understanding is that if children do not attend cannabis intervention sessions within 28 days, they may be referred to a juvenile justice team to have further penalties imposed upon them under the Young Offenders Act. Just a word on the juvenile justice teams: I know that we have started to give a bit more teeth and a bit more authority to that particular arm of the law, but I have past experience of this in our business when kids have been caught shoplifting. One kid who was caught shoplifting made a run for it. Two of our employees gave chase. The kid came out swinging and actually tried to assault our staff with the flares that he had stolen from the shop. We called the police in. While we were waiting for the police, all this kid had to say was that he did not know what we were worried about because he would be heading off down to Joondalup to the JJT. He said that they would just give him a slap on the wrist and nothing would happen—ha, ha, ha! That is pretty hard to hear as a shop owner when somebody has just stolen over \$150 worth of goods and assaulted staff. That is the kind of attitude that he had. I hope that a juvenile justice team will actually come in with a very strong message for these kids and adolescents, including those who get caught smoking cannabis or are in possession of cannabis-smoking implements, because we need to make sure that the message is getting out there that there is not a safe level of use for this drug. We cannot determine what a safe level is until we go much further down the path of research into the genetic predisposition that people may have to psychosis from using it. It is not worth taking the risk with their future or their mental health.

One of the other parts of the bill that I am particularly happy with is the harsher penalties that are included in the bill for people who supply drugs to juveniles. The proposed penalty for sale to a young person is now \$10 000, which is double the penalty under the Cannabis Control Act 2003, which will be repealed as part of this bill. People who supply drugs to children and adolescents are the lowest form of parasite in our society. I have lived in Scarborough for a long time, which is a haunt for adolescents.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Teenagers go to Scarborough in droves because a very easy public transport route ends at the beach. They can hop on a train anywhere in the metropolitan area and hop off at either Stirling or Glendalough and then catch a 400, 408 or 410 bus and then they are at Scarborough Beach. As a result of that high concentration of adolescents over summer, some very scummy people hang around at Scarborough Beach to sell drugs and to try to target that market. We will give the police the tools that they need to prosecute these people, knowing that there are some very harsh penalties in place if they are caught supplying drugs to juveniles. I am really pleased to see that. I think we will see over time a flow-on effect of less antisocial behaviour at places such as Scarborough Beach. Perhaps we can shift these drug dealers out and prevent them targeting kids who are going to the beach to enjoy the fresh air, the ocean and each other's company. Those kids can do that with freedom, knowing that they are not going to be pressured by people to buy drugs and they will not be pressured by their friends and associates to engage in risk-taking activity.

I touched previously on the banning of the sale of smoking implements. I find it ridiculous that new legislation will be introduced to prohibit the sale of cigarette packs, yet, prior to this bill being introduced, it looked as though there may have been a time at Scarborough when people could go to the local shopping centre and find all cigarettes banned from display but still find on display a bong and papers to help people consume cannabis. I find it a bizarre juxtaposition that we can indirectly promote a drug which we know can cause psychosis and on which people can develop a dependency. We know that there are adverse effects from chronically heavy use. We know the ongoing effects of cannabis use. The jury is still out on whether it is a gateway drug to harder drugs. I do not believe that we should necessarily be taking the risk of determining that. In themselves, the effects of this drug are sufficient to warrant stronger legislation, stronger restrictions and stronger regulation, and restriction of access to people who are at risk. A lot of young people who may have a propensity to develop psychiatric disorders may not have those disorders triggered until they are well into adolescence. We should not have a situation in which 14, 15 and 16-year-olds have access to cannabis before they have completed puberty and before they know whether they are in that bracket of people who could develop a psychiatric disorder, schizophrenia or psychosis as a result of cannabis use. We have to do everything we possibly can to not only educate those children, but also restrict the supply of illegal drugs. We must try to prevent some of the catastrophes that occur on our streets every day when people become too involved in the drug culture and, sadly, cannot find a way out.

I believe that the community's perception of the existing legislation—whether or not it is a reality—is that it is no longer illegal to grow a couple of plants. I am aware that there is a restriction of 30 grams of grass at any given time before a person can be prosecuted. From what I have heard anecdotally and from my experiences in my previous life as a retailer who dealt, generally speaking, with people under 30, the community's view is that it is basically open slather; people are able to grow as many plants as they want and if they get caught, they will not be prosecuted. There has been too much of a relaxed attitude towards cannabis with no consideration given to its harmful effects. After talking with people in my community about this bill, I believe that they perceive that the Liberal Party is being true to its 2008 election commitment that, if elected to office, it would be a government that is tough on drugs. We will be tough on drugs, because they are harmful to people's health and they are harmful to the wider community. The government can send that message in lots of different ways. One way is by tightening the regulation of cannabis and making the penalties much harsher. However, we must also ensure that we understand that often the people who get caught in the trap of drug use are young people who may not necessarily have all their cognitive skills intact and who may not have had enough experience to make a considered choice about getting involved in drugs.

I am looking forward to seeing the format of the cannabis intervention sessions, not from a user point of view, but from the point of view of a parent whose children or adolescents may have to undergo a cannabis intervention session. The kind of information that is presented at those sessions is very important, because it must educate our children about the risks of drug use and about the health and social effects of drug use. Children must be made aware of the personal harm that can come from losing their inhibitions or letting their guard down and becoming involved with drugs. They could find themselves in situations in which they do not have the maturity or life skills to get themselves out.

I conclude my remarks by congratulating the Minister for Police. This bill is in keeping with some of the government's other legislation. It ties in quite nicely with the hoon laws and with the laws that result in the confiscation of motor vehicles when people are caught driving while under suspension and when people have committed hoon offences. I am a big believer that if people break the law, they need to be inconvenienced. If a person breaks the law and is caught with a cannabis-smoking implement or caught in possession of an illegal amount of cannabis, he or she should be inconvenienced. Their routine should be interrupted by requiring them to attend a certain location and sit through an information session to learn about the health effects of cannabis use and the harmful effects of their transgression. It might be useful if the cannabis intervention sessions

included information about the organised crime aspect of the drug distribution network. People should be made aware of organised crime syndicates and how they benefit from the distribution and sale of illegal drugs and the ongoing effects of those activities on our community. Those activities constantly undermine the authority of our government, the police and the social fabric that we all hold so dear. Most Western Australians want their kids to grow up to have good jobs and to lead productive lives. Smoking cannabis and getting into the drug culture usually does not lead people down that path. We need to inconvenience people. I have been advised by people whose cars have been impounded that having their cars impounded has been very inconvenient. I think we should make it very inconvenient for people to be caught smoking drugs. It should be incredibly inconvenient to be caught selling drugs and drug-smoking paraphernalia, particularly to juveniles. The people who do so need to be told again and again that it is not an activity that is condoned by society or government. Further, it is not an activity that is considered a minor misdemeanour. Rather, it is an indicator of a potential pathway to more serious breaches of the law and a more serious undermining of our social fabric.

With those remarks, I commend the bill to the house.

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [1.25 pm]: I rise to make a few remarks about the Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009. I have been very fortunate that no-one in my direct family has been affected by drugs or cannabis use. Friends of mine and family friends have suffered quite tragic circumstances as a result of their children going down the path of cannabis use. I refer to one young boy who went to school in Belmont with my son. They played junior football together. He was a fantastic young kid. He was a quiet boy who plodded along. He was a handy footballer, but no star. He became addicted to cannabis. I think his cannabis use started when he was at Belmont High School. I watched from a distance as his young life deteriorated. He ended up doing time in jail for stealing. I think he broke into a pharmacy in search of drugs. He did things that one would never imagine he would do. His family was quite distraught, because they could not get any answers. He obviously had a predisposition to psychosis. That is what can happen with cannabis. Many people have tried cannabis without it having affected them in that way. But for those with a predisposition to psychosis, clearly it has the ability to wreck their lives. In the end, the situation with that young boy became so serious that his parents were told by the police to forget that they had a son; there was nothing that they could do to rehabilitate him. He had become heavily addicted, and it was only to cannabis. He went to Adelaide and was living in backpacker-type accommodation. His parents thought he had settled in well. He liked life in Adelaide. He was selling *The Big Issue* on the street and told his folks, whom he would ring occasionally to ask for some money to be put into his account, that he was enjoying Adelaide and things were going okay. One day they got a knock on the door from the police—he had been murdered in a street fight; he had been stabbed. He was a young kid in his late twenties who had so much to offer. He had been a tradesman, a farrier; he worked with horses. That was a tragic life that was lost. I speak to his father now and when the Liberal Party at the last election released its policy of taking a stronger line on illicit drugs, including cannabis, this young boy's father said to me, "Make no mistake, cannabis is a very serious drug and it can have the effect of destroying lives"—as it did to their son. It is something that this family has to live with forever. They have lost a son, and their daughter, a psychologist—a very clever girl—lost a brother. It all goes back to the fact that someone introduced him to cannabis when he was at school. I would never have picked that that young boy would get into any trouble in his life, but the problem is, as we know, and as evidence given shows, that when people get hooked on drugs sometimes they resort to anything to get the money to be able to buy more drugs.

In more recent times, when I was elected as the member for South Perth, I became aware of a group in my electorate called the Esther Foundation and I know that the Premier has been a big supporter, both when he was Leader of the Opposition and now. The Esther Foundation is a group that deals with young women who have had issues and problems in their lives. The foundation provides some fantastic rehabilitation programs for the young girls there. The Esther Foundation operates out of a small group of houses in my electorate in South Perth. The girls live at the houses and they undertake the programs from those houses. There are all sorts of programs for education so they can complete their schooling. Some of the girls are very young when they go there, and I have heard such stories from very young girls who have been involved in hold-ups and all sorts of crime, and mostly as a result of their addiction to cannabis. Some of the facts that the Esther Foundation has provided me include 88 per cent of all Esther Foundation referrals had used cannabis and 80 per cent of all referrals have had contact with a general practitioner or the mental health system as a result of their use of cannabis. The Western Australian Department of Health, Drug and Alcohol Office, reported that from 1999 to 2002 "cannabis only" referrals to treatment programs had increased by 50 per cent from 14 per cent to 23 per cent of all those people going to treatment programs; and 38 per cent of Australians over 14 years have used illicit drugs, and of that 38 per cent, 16.3 per cent over the age of 12 use cannabis daily. Patricia Lavater, the Esther Foundation's program director and Western Australian Citizen of the Year in 2008 has done a really inspirational job in guiding the program at Esther house. In a comment that was reported recently, she said —

We cannot move away from witnessing the direct correlation between cannabis use and mental health concerns and issues; significantly with teenagers, people with a family history of mental health issues

and within our indigenous community. Many of these people, especially our teenagers, are not aware of the harm and life crippling effect that this drug can have on them. I would only suspect that the present Government has a clear role to not only protect these individuals from such harm, but also to look at the social, economic and legal consequences of not making this drug illegal.

Some market analyses have also been done by the Esther Foundation. Figures from the Esther Foundation's recent program entrants indicate that treatment of women suffering from addiction to the four major recognised areas of drug abuse, being alcohol, amphetamines, cannabis and heroin, corresponds quite accurately with the levels of concern identified by the Western Australian Department of Health's drug and alcohol abuse statistics. I have seen these girls, and I know the Premier has been to Esther house and met those girls. They are terrific young people whose lives have been steered away from the fortunate course that most of us were lucky enough to take in our young lives. It was not always drug abuse, but as I said before, a very high percentage of the girls who ended up at Esther house—that is, 88 per cent—have told us their problems started with the use of cannabis. I support this bill.

The good thing about the bill is that young people will not have a criminal record. We have to be responsible as a government, and it would be a terrible thing if someone who took cannabis did have a criminal record as a result of that. We have all been young and young people do things that later on in life they probably wish they had not done. This provides an opportunity for these people. I think that the establishment of the cannabis intervention requirement scheme is a terrific idea, provided that we can make sure that these young people, people who are involved with the use of cannabis or people who have been identified as cannabis offenders, do take up that cannabis intervention requirement. It is a step in the right direction that we can work with the community. We are told that cannabis is by no means the worst drug—there are a lot worse drugs out there—but cannabis can be a gateway drug. Certainly in the case of people who have that predisposition to psychoses, it can be a very harmful drug. I support the Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009 and I look forward to some great results as a result of that legislation.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is anecdotal, but the Graylands psychiatric hospital is in my electorate and while the official statistics will not show it, the staff tell me that probably 80 per cent or more of admissions are in some way related to drug usage, primarily cannabis.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: The Premier makes the point, and it is probably a general statistic, that we will find in around 80 per cent of people with psychiatric problems that cannabis played a part.

MR M.W. SUTHERLAND (Mount Lawley — Deputy Speaker) [1.37 pm]: I rise in support of the Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009 as well. I happen to be a member of the organisation Drug Free Australia. Last year the organisation put out the publication "Cannabis — suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects". The booklet was launched here at Parliament House by Dr Skerritt, who is one of Western Australia's eminent psychiatrists. This booklet was written to provide useful information and up-to-date research to complement the National Cannabis Strategy 2006–2009.

It has been discovered that the age of cannabis users is getting younger and younger. Children and young adults are the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of cannabis use. Many speakers have spoken about how the use of cannabis can lead to severe psychosis and schizophrenia, as well as cognitive impairment, and progression to the use of other drugs. Apart from the harm that cannabis can cause to the individuals using it, of course, it also increases and contributes to public risk, such as traffic accidents, assaults and other antisocial behaviour. The widespread use of this pervasive and addictive drug demands urgent attention. I think that all of us on this side of the house are encouraged by the steps that are proposed to be implemented by this government through this new piece of legislation.

The users of cannabis need to be encouraged to cease using this very addictive drug. We all know that the potency of cannabis is increasing. There is a link between the potency of cannabis and an increase in the tetrahydrocannabinol—THC—content of the cannabis, which is caused largely by cross-breeding and hydroponic cultivation. In addition, the smoking of cannabis through a bong increases the intensity of the drug. It is good to see in this legislation that the selling of bongs will be outlawed.

Cannabis is also known to be a gateway drug. Multiple studies have shown that the use of cannabis on an ongoing basis creates the risk of abuse of other drugs, such as heroin and cocaine. They have shown also that the earlier that a person uses cannabis, the more likely it is that the person will go on to use other drugs. Cannabis dependence is extremely hard to break. Not only does cannabis use lead to the use of other drugs, but also it makes it very difficult for people to break their substance abuse if they are using cannabis together with other drugs such as alcohol. I think everyone in this house will have heard a story about or will have known people who have committed suicide as a result of cannabis use. We have just heard from the member for South Perth about young people who have started their cannabis use on a social basis and have gone on to smoke cannabis

heavily and have ended up in a very bad situation in which they have had a complete mental breakdown, or have committed suicide. I unfortunately have known two people who committed suicide as a result of cannabis use. Apparently 27 per cent of the population carry a high-risk genetic variant that can lead to the suffering of schizophrenia and psychosis if they use a narcotic drug such as cannabis. We all know also that a great deal of stress is being placed on our health system—on not only psychiatric hospitals, but also general hospitals—because of the increasing number of people who are being admitted to hospital as a result of drug abuse. One of those drugs is, of course, cannabis.

Another matter that is involved with cannabis use—I have touched on this previously—is the physical destruction that cannabis can cause. The police have started testing for drug use when they pull drivers over on the side of the road. The use of cannabis, together with the use of other narcotics, and alcohol, is causing a great increase in assaults and other antisocial behaviour. It is also having an impact on our hospitals, as I have said, because the hospital staff are often placed under threat from people who report to the hospital. That is putting a great amount of stress on our health system.

The Drug Free Australia research recommends that all Australian governments urgently implement effective preventive drug education in all states and territories. We should be looking at developing strong policies to educate secondary schoolchildren and inform them of the risks of smoking cannabis, initially, and the dangers of getting hooked on cannabis. They should also be informed about the dangers that can result from the use of cannabis, such as suicide, drug-induced psychosis, schizophrenia and depression. We have heard a lot recently about tobacco and about how the federal government wants to ban the sale of tobacco products in glossy packaging et cetera. We also now have a new focus on the abuse of alcohol. I think it would be appropriate to include cannabis as an addition to the concerns about those two other drugs. The federal, state and territory police are also attempting to implement a narcotics, opiates and amphetamines project, under which they are blitzing people from time to time in an attempt to cut down on the use of cannabis and also to try to weed out places where cannabis plants are being grown.

This legislation is an attempt to reduce the use of cannabis; further regulate the sale of bong; make it compulsory for cannabis users to get some type of counselling instead of being let off the hook with just a caution; and stopping the growing of cannabis plants by individuals. It is a move in the right direction. As I said, we have concerned ourselves in this house at great length with tobacco. That is now being overshadowed by the federal legislation, which is taking that a step further. Another matter that we should be looking at is the scourge of alcohol. We are also faced with a great social problem caused by the abuse of alcohol. We are looking at both cannabis and alcohol abuse. This bill will go some degree towards alleviating the problems caused by the use of cannabis. For those reasons, I will be supporting the bill.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [1.47 pm]: I too would like to say a few words about the Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009. This is a very important bill. I strongly support this bill. Cannabis has been debated for many years both in this Parliament and in the community at large. People have arguments for and against cannabis use and cannabis law. It is disappointing that the previous Labor government's Cannabis Control Act allowed cannabis to be treated so flippantly in this Parliament and, therefore, for that to be reflected in society as a whole. I am glad that the Barnett–Liberal government is taking this issue seriously and is addressing the drug problem in our society. Cannabis is not a soft drug. It is not like smoking cigarettes. It is not like drinking alcohol. It has serious effects, and it needs to be taken seriously. We need to make sure that the legislation reflects that requirement. The use of cannabis is very damaging to a person's health.

One thing that was noted is that according to the WA Police crime statistics, since Labor's Cannabis Control Act was enacted in 2004, there has been an increase in total drug traffic and drug possession offences in Western Australia. Since 2003–04, total drug traffic offences have increased by 11.3 per cent, and total possession offences have increased by 24.9 per cent.

Mr M. McGowan: Do you understand the logic behind what you are saying there?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is about the statistics about cannabis use in the community and about offences.

Mr M. McGowan: Do you understand what you have just said?

MR A. KRSTICEVIC: There has been a marked increase since the legislation came into effect.

Mr M. McGowan: You said drugs, not cannabis.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is in total for drug possession and drug offences.

Mr M. McGowan: The police argument is that the former laws freed up time for them to hunt for more significant drugs. That might explain what you just said.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That may have had some effect, but at the same time the usage of cannabis became more prevalent throughout the community because the laws were quite soft.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Where are the statistics on that?

Mr J.R. Quigley: Didn't the drug authority say there was an eight per cent decline?

Mr M. McGowan: Yes, it said there was a decline. It might mean that the investigation of harder drugs was being pursued more by the police. I think that is what your statistics prove.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: They prove that as well. Mental health issues have been on the increase for a long time now, and members know that the Barnett government has put in place a Minister for Mental Health. There can be no doubt that some mental health issues can be linked to the use of cannabis and the soft laws surrounding that usage. We know that cannabis is now far more potent than it was in the 1960s and we know that it can lead to cancer, depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and can reduce mental capacity, motivation and drive. We have known that since the 1960s, and since then cannabis has become much more sophisticated as people have grown much stronger drugs that are having a more significant effect on people's mental capacity. It is also important to understand that the message that was sent to the community through the previous legislation encouraged children to start taking drugs at a younger age. That the punishment for being caught with up to 30 grams of cannabis was, effectively, a slap on the wrist sent the wrong message. Thirty grams of cannabis is quite a lot and over 100 cigarettes can be made out of that. It is quite a significant amount of cannabis, and to tell people that if they get caught with that much cannabis they just have to go to an education session, which is not mandatory, or pay a fine, is sending the wrong message.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Hardly anybody showed up.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is another part of my argument. We have heard many statistics in this house that show that people were treating it as a joke and were not even showing up to the sessions.

It is important to note that cannabis use leads to harder drugs. I am not saying that because people smoke cannabis they are naturally led into trying harder drugs from a psychological viewpoint, but the environment that those people mix in means that they could become exposed to other drugs. Because those people already smoke cannabis, it becomes less of an issue for them, and then all of a sudden people introduce other drugs into the scenario and the cannabis smokers might try those as well. The former government sent the message to members of the public that they could smoke drugs, and if they were caught, there would be no real, serious consequences. The former government also sent the message that if members of the public wanted to grow two plants, there would be no serious consequences. It is amazing that the former government gave people the opportunity to manufacture drugs in their own homes and give them to children, the only consequence being, if they were caught, that they might have to attend an educational session or receive a fine.

Mr A.P. Jacob: They didn't even have to!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It was not mandatory; that is right. It is very important to note that.

Another thing that amazes me is that when we walk through shopping centres such as Kingsway, newsagencies have bongs and drug paraphernalia on display in the mall as people are walking past with children. People who buy these things also stand around there and they have a certain look about them. That does not exactly send the right message.

Mr M. McGowan: What sort of look do they have?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: They look a bit rough around the edges—they look as though they are a bit worse for wear. They look very intently at what is being sold.

Mr M. McGowan: What do you think they think when they look at you?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: When I am out with my children, I quickly shuffle them past because I do not want them to ask any questions. I do not want them to see what is on display, because if they ask me and I say to them that drugs can be smoked with those implements, I would have to tell them it is legal to buy these implements in this state.

Mr M. McGowan: Don't take them to a hospital then! Whatever you do, don't take them to a hospital—they have syringes in there!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I might then have to tell them that if people buy and use drugs, they will not face any serious consequences. Those implements are also readily available at markets. I think that allowing people to sell these smoking implements is sending the wrong message and it is very, very disappointing.

We are constantly seeing news stories about parties attended by young people getting out of control. No doubt part of that is related to alcohol consumption. Consumption of drugs also plays a part. I am sure there is significant usage of marijuana at those parties, which reduces young people's inhibitions, and they do things they would not normally do. One of the more serious side effects of that is young girls under the influence of drugs in

combination with alcohol being enticed to have sex, which can result in unwanted pregnancies and a range of other issues. I think there must be some relationship between the two, and it must be taken seriously. The messages that we send in this Parliament are messages that the community takes seriously. If it appears that we are not taking our role seriously in the formulation of legislation, the community will react accordingly.

In 2006 the Australian Institute of Criminology released its annual report on drug use, which indicated that 86 per cent of female detainees and 76 per cent of male detainees tested positive to drugs, and 65 per cent of males detainees charged with aggravated assault offences tested positive to cannabis. It is quite amazing that most detainees had cannabis in their systems. Also, 39 per cent of male detainees charged with a robbery offence and property offence tested positive to drugs. It is important to note that drugs are related to crime, such as break-ins, robberies and assaults. Why do people commit those crimes? It is obvious: they get addicted to cannabis or other drugs—if they start at a young age, it is cannabis—and then they need to buy drugs to feed that habit. What do they do? They break into houses and cars and create property damage. They then hock stolen goods and buy drugs to share with their friends, which encourages more very bad behaviour.

I commend this government for making it a criminal offence to grow plants; it is very important to send that message. We cannot encourage people to manufacture drugs in their own homes by making it legal. I think that is just absolutely ridiculous. I remember that I just could not believe it when that legislation came out. I thought, “Every single house in the state will now have two plants”.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Definitely not mine!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Well, not every house! Not the Minister for Police’s or mine!

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Potentially, they could! I am sure there were a lot of them because people took this as a green light. It was definitely the wrong message. If we send that message with the sale of smoking implements, it sends the wrong message over and over again. Statistics have been cited in this house that indicate that a lot of accidents that happen involve people who are under the influence of drugs, specifically cannabis.

This Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009 will tackle a lot of interrelated issues. The wrong messages have been sent to the community and they have really made families suffer. The former government needs to take some responsibility for that and how it dealt with issues around cannabis. This Parliament needs to apologise to the people and children of Western Australia for not taking its job seriously in this area. The current Minister for Police should be commended for the strong stance he has taken on this issue, and the Barnett government should be commended for being aware and listening to the community, which is the important thing. We are listening to the community and taking its views seriously and, from that, we will implement legislation that reflects what society expects us to be doing. That is a very critical factor. There is no doubt that we will continue to do that for many years to come. It is very important for me to say that people have been hurt by using drugs and that families have been destroyed. We need to look not only at the Cannabis Law Reform Bill, but also others. We need to make sure that we continue to toughen up the laws, to make people accountable for their actions and to deliver good government to this state. I believe that this bill is a good step in that direction.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.