

## **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (DRUG DETECTION POWERS)**

### **AMENDMENT BILL**

**3 April 2008**

**The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD:** Family First commends the government on this worthwhile bill and notes the opposition's intention of support. Family First understands that illegal drugs are a significant concern for parents—and, as a parent myself, it is certainly a concern I have about my young daughter for the future.

Drugs are dangerous. They destroy lives, they destroy families, and they destroy communities. Family First believes that we, as legislators in this state, must send the strongest possible message to the community that illicit drugs are indeed very dangerous, that drug use will never be tolerated, and that laws must be enforced to the full extent. Whether this bill is belated or not (and there was some discussion about this in the chamber yesterday) it would regulate the use of drug detection dogs in people and vehicle screening operations, and it would enable police to establish and conduct drug detection screening operations on identified drug transit routes and in various public places. Finally, it will amend section 52 to expand police powers with the power of search and seizure of drugs where appropriate. The changes will result in additional police powers for the location and seizure of illicit drugs, and it will therefore come as no surprise that Family First will support this bill wholeheartedly.

Several locations are named as being areas in which police dogs can operate. At the moment the bill names licensed premises, entertainment venues and public transport locations—and that includes carriers and associated drop off and pick up points. We can assume from this general list that things like rave parties, Big Day Out-type events and other events, nightclubs, for example, will be targeted and that the surrounding areas will also be targeted—for instance, car parks and

other facilities surrounding those types of venues where illicit drug deals can occur.

I believe one area that should be included in this bill which has not been specifically included (although it is arguable that powers exist anyway) are the areas surrounding non-treatment service providers. That is the other major area where illicit drug deals take place and, as I say, it is missing from this bill. I am not sure whether that is just an oversight or whether it has been specifically omitted.

Some members may recall that the Hon. Ann Bressington and myself responded to some constituents' concerns about the Hutt Street precinct last year. Drug dealing is rampant in that area, as I discovered in my visit that day; dealers know that addicts will be in the vicinity so they seek to meet with them in or around those premises. The accompanying *Advertiser* article which appeared on 24 March last year stated:

'A taxpayer-funded program in Hutt Street in the city is putting the safety of nearby traders and residents at risk, two state MPs have claimed. Independent MP Ann Bressington and Family First MP Dennis Hood visited Hutt Street after receiving complaints from residents about the behaviour of drug users in the area. Ms Bressington said a program at the Hutt Street Centre was a 'honeypot' for addicts who regularly publicly injected drugs near the charity organisation. Both MPs have called for the program to be operated in more controlled environments such as hospitals where, they say, stricter controls and regulations could be implemented. They remained vehemently opposed to supervised injecting rooms...' The article goes on:

'At Hutt Street, people rock up at the drop-in centre to get their needle, hook up with their dealer outside and go down the alleyway and shoot up in the vacant lots', Ms Bressington said, after witnessing the activity.' It continues:

‘Mr Hood said he was shocked at how easy it appeared to be to buy drugs in the area and was concerned about the prevalence of public drug use around Hutt Street.’

I will not continue to read the article because I think members get the idea that these centres do serve as congregation points for illegal drug activity, and I believe there is a good case to specifically include them in this bill. If not specifically, then certainly Family First will need to be convinced that the powers to at least implicitly include them in the bill are adequate. It is these non-treatment service providers that we believe require investigation under this bill; as I said, they are an attractive place for illegal activity.

With those few words, again, I indicate Family First support for the bill—but with that one question mark over those particular providers, which we would like to explore in the committee stage.