

DRUG POLICY

14 November 2007

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: A report recently released by the Drug Advisory Council of Australia shows that 29 per cent of Australian teenagers between 14 and 19 years of age had used an illicit drug on at least one occasion. For the Swedish teenager, the figure was only 8 per cent, approximately one quarter of the Australian figure. The report noted that Australia needs to copy the successful Swedish drug strategies that have brought about this low illicit drug use.

Elements of the Swedish success were a zero tolerance approach towards drug dealers and manufacturers and a focus on mandatory rehabilitation for drug addicts. The key vision underlying the Swedish program and propagated through all the government channels in that country is the stated goal to be 'a drug free society'. My questions are:

1. Does the minister believe that South Australia should also aim to be a drug free society?

2. Will the minister lobby cabinet to have this worthy goal included in South Australia's Strategic Plan?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health) (14:48): I thank the honourable member for his most important question. Indeed, the use of illicit drugs is a very significant problem for our community and for most communities around the world. Australia has a national harm minimisation policy to drug abuse which is not only upheld by our federal Liberal government but which also underpins our state government drug policy. The aim of our policy both at national and state levels is to bring about abstinence from illicit drug use. In that respect, the aim is to remove illicit drug use from our community.

I have spoken about the Swedish model in this place on numerous occasions. It is a different country and has a different history and culture and a completely different social welfare infrastructure to that of Australia. It also has a range of projects available to attack drug use, including harm minimisation projects such as clean needle programs and methadone replacement therapy. With regard to the honourable member's question, the aim of our policy is that of abstinence and to remove illicit drug use from our community.