

DRUG PARAPHERNALIA

22 February 2007

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Health and Substance Abuse a question about the availability of drug paraphernalia in South Australia.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Drug paraphernalia such as pipes, bongs and water pipes are readily available at a number of stores throughout South Australia. Given that these implements are commonly used to consume the illicit drugs cannabis and methamphetamine, suggestions have been made to ban their sale—indeed, by a member of this chamber. Banning these implements has worked successfully in Queensland, I note. An argument that the state government has used against this type of ban is that the items in question are also utilised for the consumption of legal substances such as tobacco. My questions are:

1. In the government's estimation, what percentage of pipes, bongs and water pipes are used to smoke legal substances such as tobacco?

The Hon. A.M. Bressington: None.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I continue:

2. What specific data, if any, does the minister have to support the argument that these devices are commonly used for legal purposes?

The Hon. A.M. Bressington: None.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: My final question is:

3. If the state government does not have any such data, will it support measures to ban drug paraphernalia?

The Hon. A.M. Bressington: No.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I do not know whether the honourable member would like to accept the Hon. Ms Bressington's answers but we will ask the minister to respond.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse): In relation to the legislation around drug paraphernalia, these matters are mainly under the purview of the Attorney-General, and I am happy to refer those matters to him and bring back a response. In relation to the specific data that the honourable member has requested, I do not know whether that information is available, but if it is, I will attempt to find it and bring it back to this chamber.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I have a supplementary question. Does the minister believe that such drug paraphernalia is primarily used for legal or illegal purposes?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have made it quite clear that I do not have data in terms of the usage rates. I think it is most important, as politicians and members of parliament, that our advice and opinions be based on informed views. I have said that I am happy to bring back the information if it is available. I do understand that at least some of the paraphernalia is used for legal purposes but, in terms of what percentage, as I have stated, I clearly do not have those figures.

The Hon. A.M. BRESSINGTON: I have a supplementary question, Mr President. Can the minister explain why, if she believes that all the decisions must be based on evidence, there is such a lack of evidence and why there are no statistics collected or studies done on these sorts of issues?

The PRESIDENT: The honourable minister has indicated she will not speculate and she will rely on expert information. The Hon. Mr Lawson has the call.