



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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DRUG REHABILITATION [NORTH QUEENSLAND COURT DIVERSION INITIATIVE] AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.54 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly in support of the Drug Rehabilitation (North Queensland Court Diversion Initiative) Amendment Bill. In doing so I will not run through the broad merits of the policy, as others have already done so more than adequately. Rather, I will share the experience of the drug court in Ipswich. I recently spent a Thursday morning in the Ipswich drug court talking to the public servants and community workers who support the program, the participants who front up every couple of weeks and the families who go there to support them. Sitting in the hidden confines of court 4 at the Ipswich Court House, the strongest message that came through to me was one of responsibility and one of there being a chance for people.

When I was there, a young guy—probably in his late 20s—fronted the magistrate, articulately talked about the struggle he had been through to get off drugs and, with the genuine blessing of the magistrate, graduated the program after 14 months of participation. The next guy to come forward was so shy that he could not speak up to the magistrate and had to be escorted away to get some encouragement. Another man I saw denied any knowledge when fronted with the fact that a drug test had revealed THC in his system. These three people had gone into the drug court system from the same scene of drugs and crime in Ipswich and the three had been given the same opportunity to sort their own lives out. One had taken responsibility, another needed more help and the third could do nothing but duck and weave and blame someone else. As in Ipswich, not everyone who gets involved in the drug court program up here will have it succeed, but all will be given support and a real opportunity to take responsibility for their drug habit and for their lives. That is the role a progressive state government should be playing, and I commend the bill to the House.
