

DRUG POLICY

22 July 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Iceland has recently reported some tremendous results in reducing its illicit drug use amongst teenagers. Indeed, the newly released figures indicate that they have seen cannabis use in 15 to 16 year olds reduce from some 17 per cent in 1989 to 9 per cent in 2006 and, further, in the same age group, amphetamine use has reduced from 7 per cent in 1998 to just 4 per cent in 2006.

In applying some elements of the tough Swedish model to illicit drug use, Iceland now supports a zero tolerance model. They have adopted a vision of a drug-free society with annual surveys to locate and deal with problem locations, targeting specific youths at risk and groups that envelop those youths, and developing teaching and parental support programs across their society. My questions are:

1. How do our teenage drug use figures compare to those of Iceland?
2. Given that recent figures suggest that teenage cannabis and amphetamine use is at similar levels in South Australia to that of Iceland when they commenced this approach, why shouldn't we adopt the same approach here in South Australia?
3. Why hasn't South Australia seen the same reduction in drug use amongst our teenagers as Iceland has in recent years, and what can be learnt from the approach that Iceland has taken in order to match their outstanding success?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning): Obviously, I do not have any information, and I am not sure that my colleague would necessarily have detailed information on exactly what has happened in Iceland. I will refer that question to her and make sure that we get a response.

I can say that we have a Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in this country of which not only is the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse a member but also of which I am as Minister for Police. At a meeting we had in relation to alcohol last week the comment was made that Australia is fairly unique. In this country we have close cooperation between police and health officials—probably much closer than in most countries of the world. I think that is a positive point from which we can start: that we do have close cooperation between the policing arm and the health sector. That is an advantage from which we start. We have a national strategy on drug abuse, as well as in relation to alcohol abuse, but for the further detail I will refer that to my colleague and bring back a response.