

METHAMPHETAMINES

**221. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Attorney General:**

I refer to Tom Percy's *The Sunday Times* article, "It's the good who break bad" and I ask the Attorney General whether he agrees with Tom Percy that until we start treating the use of methamphetamines as primarily a medical issue rather than a criminal one, the trade will continue to escalate; if so, what will he do to make the shift; and, if not, why not?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN replied:**

I thank the honourable member for the question but I am a bit puzzled as to where it is leading. I did have a quick glance at the article in *The Sunday Times*.

**Hon Sally Talbot:** He does mention you, Attorney General.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** He did not mention me by name; he did mention me by title and he was not quite accurate.

**Hon Sally Talbot:** So the Attorney General has not watched the program?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** No, I have not watched the program *Breaking Bad*. The reference was in the context of a radio interview when I was asked a question about the confiscation of the proceeds of crime. The point that I was making was that if someone chooses to "break bad" in the sense of deciding to go into drug trafficking as a means of supplementing their income, it is a gamble. They gamble with everything on the table, not simply the proceeds of that crime. If, in fact, they do get caught, they lose everything through the operation of the Criminal Property Confiscation Act 2000. I had not watched the program but I was aware of the general gist.

On the question of methylamphetamine, like all drugs of addiction, it is a combination of a medical issue—probably a psychological or psychiatric issue in many cases—and one of social policy and criminal law. Methylamphetamine, as with any other sort of deleterious drug, is controlled by law. Its distribution into the community and its availability are controlled by law and regulation, and like most social issues, it involves regulation through a carrot and stick approach. The stick is the sanctions provided by criminal law to deter people from engaging in criminal activity that harms them and others. The carrot is the opportunity to be weaned off drugs and receive treatment for addiction and the underlying issues that may give rise to people engaging in that sort of destructive behaviour. I am not quite sure what the member was hoping for beyond that, but like any criminal sanction, it is not a solution in itself. There is always, particularly with drugs of addiction and the like, a medical element or a psychiatric and psychological element as well.