

Hansard
Legislative Assembly Budget Estimates Committee B
1 June 2010

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to the tenth dot point on page 477, which refers to the growth in the economy and a growth in the sale of illicit drugs. Also the state government is providing additional resources to detect and dismantle clandestine drug laboratories. Can the minister indicate the efforts there and their success or otherwise?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Obviously there is an emerging trend of young persons, who have never had any adverse contact with police, dealing in substantial quantities of amphetamine-type substances. The amount of disposable income of the youth and the economy of scale results in youth buying, often as part of a cooperative, trafficable quantities of amphetamine-type substances at reduced cost. There has been a significant increase in the discovery of clandestine laboratories. We have had some fantastic results recently, as the member has obviously heard me espouse in the chamber, followed up with newspaper reports.

We are catching a lot of people who carry out this dreadful business of manufacturing clandestine drugs. That is playing a big part in the major crime unit within police.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Are there changes in the types of drugs being used or brought in? Is there an increased use of heroin coming in from the Middle East or otherwise?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am advised that there has been an increase in the importation of both cocaine and heroin.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Has there been an increase in the purity? A couple of years ago there was a significant increase in the purity of heroin which led to large numbers of deaths both in Western Australia and other states—is that a trend here?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not an expert on the purity of heroin or cocaine. I have never snorted or injected, so I could not give the member a firsthand experience or an answer to that.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Are people dying in increasing numbers from it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I do not know whether they are dying in increasing numbers but people are dying, obviously, from those types of drugs. That is why there has been a concerted effort on the part of police to try to stop drugs not only coming across the border from interstate but also being brought in from overseas. Obviously, Federal Police and Customs at, say, Perth Airport are involved.

Police have had success in locating clandestine drug labs and also drug dealers. As the member would be aware, organised crime is involved in illegal drugs. They see that as a lot of money coming their way. That is why the government is committed to try to ensure that we get on top of it.