



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PROOF

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Illicit Drugs

QUESTION

Tuesday, 8 September 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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Questioner Lambie, Sen Jacqui
Speaker

Source Senate
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Responder Abetz, Sen Eric
Question No.

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Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:52): My question without notice is to the Prime Minister's representative, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Abetz. I refer the senator to the fact that Australian parents do not have the right under our national laws to seek nonconsensual rehab or involuntary medical treatment should their children become hooked to highly addictive and dangerous drugs like ice. I also refer the senator to the fact that children as young as eight are using and are addicted to the drug ice. Will the Abbott government work with myself, Senator Xenophon and other crossbench senators to create historic national legislation which will give Australian parents the right to involuntarily detox and begin to rehabilitate their children if medical professionals agree that those children are addicted to ice or other similar harmful drugs?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:53): I think we are all agreed in this place that the scourge of ice and other drug-taking is a matter that is destroying lives, not only for the individuals that are taking these illegal and highly inappropriate substances but also for their families and their communities, and indeed it undermines society at large. The honourable senator can be assured that we as a government would seek to work with anybody that has ideas to put forward to overcome this as an issue but also for individuals. We can discuss numbers all we like, but each one of those numbers is an individual person with an individual very, very sorry tale to tell and then a family around that person as well. Indeed, the honourable senator is only too painfully aware of that herself, with her recent media commentary on how this matter has affected her own family.

The suggestion put forward by the honourable senator will of course be considered by government. What I would say to her is that, any approach should be evidence based and should have some professional input. I must say that I for one—and please do not take this as government policy—am attracted to the suggestion of the honourable senator, because asking for consensual agreement from people who are so, if I can use the colloquialism, out of their mind as to be unable to give proper, informed consent really does lead us in the dilemma we are in as a community. (*Time expired*)

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:55): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the senator to the fact that sophisticated dangerous groups of organised criminals nationwide and with international connections are manufacturing highly addictive drugs like ice and are making billions of dollars of profit in peddling those drugs to our children. Will the Abbott government work with myself and other crossbench senators to create historic national laws which target organised criminal gangs?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:56): If there is one thing that can be accepted across the chamber is that we as a government seek to be a government of zero tolerance when it comes to drugs and when it comes to the criminality involved in that hideous industry which is seeking to make money on the destruction of other people's lives. If there is a legislative remedy that can be achieved to assist us in that fight, of course the government will be all ears, willing to listen to any proposal that might help us fight this scourge. But of course—and I am sure the honourable senator would agree—it is not only legislation; albeit it is a very important part of the armoury. We also have to look at who else might be protecting these insidious elements in our society. (*Time expired*)

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:57): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer the senator to advice I received from a highly respected military intelligence expert who reports that the total cost to the Australian government of dropping one laser guided bomb on a terrorist in Syria is up to \$5 million. Can the

senator detail for this chamber the number of ice rehab and detox beds for our addicted children the Australian government could provide for up to \$5 million?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:57): Regrettably, two excellent previous questions have been undone by an attempt at a cheap political shot by the honourable senator. The attempt to link the two issues I think does the senator no credit at all. What I would say is that any support that can be given to the victims of illegal drugs of course should be provided. Similarly, Australia has a responsibility to defeat the evil death cult which is destroying lives by beheading people—

Senator Lambie: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Library research shows Australia in one year has conducted 119 airstrikes and dropped 447 bombs on Iraq.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, I need to understand what your point of order is.

Senator Lambie: I just wanted to know how much it costs to kill one terrorist. How much does it cost our RAAF to kill a Middle Eastern terrorist? Could I please put that request in, and please get back to me with that figure. That would be great.

The PRESIDENT: I will take that as a point of order on relevance. I think the minister has been relevant to your question. The minister has concluded his answer.