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I refer to recent articles of the Courier Mail '*Crime's foot soldiers just out of school: Teen Drugs Army*' (20 October 2012) and '*Police target kingpins in the battle across drugs*' (22 October 2012), where the CM rightly commends the concerted efforts of the QPS and the AFP to disrupt the supply of drugs to our communities. However, I think we should also be talking about how the long term under investment in prevention and treatment services for individuals with substance misuse issues largely nullify their efforts.

Whilst we have a National Drug Strategy that prioritises law enforcement, health and prevention activities equally, three quarters of the state and federal government's financial investment in measures to address substance misuse in our communities is directed to law enforcement, with health and prevention priorities reduced to little more than afterthoughts.

This is despite the fact that the vast majority of those arrested by QPS Officers are drug users, not drug dealers, as demonstrated by the very data published alongside the articles by the CM, which indicate an average amount of 10grams per heroin seizure, 8grams per cocaine seizure and just 4 grams per amphetamine seizure. Further examination of the data source confirms that over 86% of the arrests cited (or 20 375 arrests) were for those struggling with substance misuse issues, making drug users 6 times more likely to be facing our courts than the so-called 'drug king-pins'.

By those numbers, the investment in treatment and prevention services should match that of law enforcement, to support education to prevent the uptake of drugs and to support individuals to recover from dependence and reconnect with the community.

Instead, disappointingly, over the last six months in Queensland we have witnessed the withdrawal of funding to efficient and effective non-government AOD services with more to come, as the Qld Government has signalled an end to Drug Court and a review drug diversion programs, despite their proven efficacy, on the basis that it's apparently cheaper to lock people up that divert them to treatment.

If we consider the 20 375 Queenslanders arrested on drug related offences last year, 3 410 were admitted to a diversion program, with over 2 700 of these successfully graduating. Numerous independent evaluations of these programs have found significantly reduced recidivism rates (as high as 80%) amongst the whole cohort, whether they graduate or not. The truth is that diversion programs don't just reduce long-term costs to the community, they provide immediate financial relief.

Finally, we must all recognise that all we achieve by likening those seeking treatment for substance misuse to 'drug king pins' living a life of luxury is to glorify a mostly erroneous view of the drug dealer lifestyle and minimise the pain and enormous trauma suffered by those who have lost a loved one to substance misuse. Isn't it about time we had a frank conversation about the way in which we as a community seek to address an issue that affects every family in Queensland.

Kind regards

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**Executive Officer**