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MEDIA RELEASE

Government must get serious on ICE in the North

Faced with what can only be described as a regional ICE crisis, Member for Burdekin, Dale Last, has called on the State Government to take action on drugs in regional Queensland.

The 2018 annual overdose report released by the Penington Institute found that the continued growth in overdose deaths is linked to highly potent drugs, including ICE and that the rate of deaths in regional Queensland was significantly higher than in Brisbane.

"If there has ever been a question about the need to have drug rehabilitation services in regional Queensland, they have been answered and it's time for action," Mr Last said.

"The LNP has committed to increasing treatment for, education about and awareness of ICE while the government says the right things but does little."

"As far back as 2016 this government has pledged better services for Brisbane but nothing for regional areas that are being destroyed by ICE and its effects every day."

"This week we announced a commitment to 4 new centres in regional Queensland if we are elected to government in 2020... we want to take action; not just talk."

Drugs, and ICE specifically, was mentioned as a major contributing factor to the spike in property crime in the Burdekin recently and Mr Last said the government needs to start taking action for the benefit of the whole community.

"The Police Minister sat there and heard senior Police say there is a direct link between ICE and property crime but in nearly two years nothing the state government has done nothing to provide rehab in regional Queensland."

"In 2016 the government said it was a high priority to offer rehabilitation close to the families of the people who fall victim to ICE but little, if anything, happened to deliver on their commitment."

"In February this year the Premier, the Health Minister and the Police Minister signed a plan to address the issue of ICE but the only regional commitment was for a centre in Rockhampton that has now been delayed."

"This is a government that talks about how they are tackling this scourge... they talk about addressing the criminal issues and the health issues but, in Regional Queensland, that's all it is... talk."

"It's all well and good to have intervention teams in hospitals, and hardworking health staff are doing their best, but there is simply not enough rehabilitation services to help regional Queenslanders kick their addiction to his horrible drug."

The Action on ICE plan, released in February provided funding for specialist services in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton but, according to Mr Last, it is an increase in facilities that is needed.

"If you take Townsville as an example, you have a rehab facility run by the Salvation Army that is bursting at the seams," Mr Last said.

"Facilities like *"the Salvos"* facility in Townsville are doing their best but the community is being let down by a government that ignores regional areas, despite the research."

"These are damning statistics and something has to be done; especially when the rate of death from accidental overdoses is 38% higher in regional Queensland than it is in Brisbane."

"The government needs to redirect funding to the regions urgently... we are seeing spikes in crime and higher rates of people losing their life and the government can't turn a blind eye any longer."

"If the LNP is elected in 2020 we will build rehab facilities at Townsville, Toowoomba, in Wide Bay and on the Sunshine Coast... it's clear who cares about tackling drugs in regional Queensland and it's not this Labor government."

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