

Thursday, 6 March 2008

CHEECH AND CHONG TRY TO SAVE THE BONG

Attorney-General Michael Atkinson says Liberal Party Legal Affairs spokesman Isobel Redmond and Independent M.P. Kris Hanna have become the Cheech & Chong of the State Parliament as they try to save the bong.

Today in Parliament Mr Hanna put forward an amendment to the *Drug Paraphernalia Bill* that would allow the sale of devices known as “hookahs, narghiles, shishas and ghalyans” under the new bill rather than the outright ban that the Government wants.

Mrs Redmond told the House of Assembly that she would be supporting this amendment.

The Attorney-General says that such a move would in fact make the legislation worthless.

“Here we have Cheech and Chong doing all in their power to try to save the bong because, unless we ban the sale of all of these implements, retailers of such paraphernalia will market hookahs, narghiles, shishas and ghalyans as implements with which to smoke cannabis,” Mr Atkinson says.

“Indeed the name “shisha” is derived from the word ‘hashish.’

“There is no distinction that can be made in law between bongs and hookahs because hookahs or narghiles are water pipes just like bongs and can be used to smoke cannabis”

Mr Atkinson says he was surprised at Mrs Redmond’s decision to support Mr Hanna.

“I suspect that, with their depleted ranks, the Liberal Party will take any opportunity it can to curry favour with Mr Hanna.

“I would be disappointed if this legislation foundered owing to such a move.

“The people of South Australia say they want tougher drug laws and the Rann Government has been delivering them. Indeed Mrs Redmond’s leader, Martin Hamilton-Smith, has been calling for tough new laws and yet here she is contradicting his position again, as she did recently on outlawing criminal bikie gangs.”

Under the legislation that has now been adopted by the Government, after it was originally introduced by Independent M.L.C. Ann Bressington, offenders who sell drug paraphernalia would face penalties of up to \$50,000 or two years imprisonment.

Mr Atkinson says there is widespread public concern that paraphernalia intended for use with illicit drugs is freely available from drug-culture shops, such as Off Ya Tree, in Hindley Street, despite existing laws meant to control their use and availability.

“This law will become unworkable if the opposition continue to insist on supporting this amendment and such paraphernalia will continue to be freely available in South Australia.”