



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

MEDIA RELEASE



Grimley Calls on New Initiatives to Reduce Recidivism in AOD Offenders: Sentencing Deferral & SCRAM CAM in Sentencing

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State leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party, Stuart Grimley is calling on the Government to get serious about reducing recidivism in repeat offenders who have alcohol and other drugs (AOD) as a core component of their offending.

Grimley is asking the Government to allow magistrates and judges the ability to hand down SCRAM's Continuous Alcohol Monitoring (CAM) ankle bracelets as a sentencing option. He is also calling on the Government to introduce an additional sentencing deferral option with regimented, regular drug and alcohol testing for better accountability and an evidence-based approach to treatment for offenders.

He will introduce a motion on Wednesday in Parliament asking the Government to consider implementing these two options into our court system.

As a former Victoria Police Detective, Grimley has seen his fair share of crime and would like to see more innovative approaches from the Government to reduce recidivism in AOD offenders, including repeat drink driving, drunken assaults and family violence.

SCRAM CAM – also referred to as a 'breathalyser for the ankle' – is an electronic monitoring device that checks the offenders' sweat every 30 minutes, or 48 times a day, for the presence of alcohol. They can detect when the user interferes with the system, such as puts something between the ankle and the device, sprays hand sanitizer (or other alcoholic substances) on the ankle or tampers with the bracelet – including removing it.

The USA have used these devices since 2003 and they quickly rolled out across the globe. UK courts currently use thousands of these units to sentence alcohol-fuelled offenders. New Zealand use the devices for high-risk offenders on probation and those on bail. Interestingly, Victoria uses SCRAM CAM devices on parolees, with an impressive 96.5% sober rate. It has monitored over 1,000 offenders using the bracelets with just under 100 offenders on parole or post-sentence schemes currently wearing the devices now.

The results of SCRAM CAM programs are incredible. In one pilot in the UK, 111 career criminals had an average of 12 prior arrests, 8 sanctions and 6 court convictions each. The study found that 92% of these 'career criminals' did not breach once during the pilot period. A similar South Dakota approach found an 80% reduction in the likelihood for DUIs one year after program participation, so there is evidence of longevity. On average, most programs find that less than 6% of offenders end up back at court for failing to comply.

Benefits to the wearer include the ability to maintain employment, to attend programs including treatment and counselling, accountability and the freedom that comes with overcoming addiction.

Those targeted with this sentencing option would be recidivist offenders where alcohol has consistently been a factor. Most programs are targeted at repeat drink drivers but quickly expand. In other jurisdictions, the best results have been observed where there is judicial discretion. As an example, offenders with no fixed address may be required to set up their 'Base Station' (where data is uploaded) at a probation office so this would need to be a consideration for courts. Those diagnosed with clinical addiction would not be eligible due to health risks.



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In Victoria, the proposal has received support from former Drug Court Chief Magistrate Tony Parsons, defence lawyers, academics (including Deakin Universities' Centre for Drug, Alcohol and Addiction Research) and many more.

Mr Grimley spoke directly with the UK Police Minister, Kit Malthouse, who is a huge advocate of SCRAM CAM devices. He said when confronted with 700,000 alcohol-related violence incidents every year (costing the UK a fortune socially and economically) this was a great "tool in the toolkit" for magistrates.

South Dakota, which runs a similar program, says the USA is moving completely away from alcohol interlock devices because they believe you need to treat the person, not the car.

Quote attributable to a UK offender who took part in the SCRAM CAM Pilot:

"I'd just say that I've been quite surprised how it has worked really because I didn't think I would actually be like this today. I didn't think I'd ever change [...] and I have, and I think completely different to what I did six months ago. You know what I mean? It's mad really."

Quote attributable to probation staff in the UK:

"So to be on a tag [and] to not be drinking, it positively impacts on the other things in their lives and on their relationships. I think of a guy in a domestic violence case, who has reduced his drinking and had her [his partner] reduce her drinking, and together they drink less and don't have the same altercations that they would have done when they both would drink. So it's a good impact."

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"Victoria has a huge problem with recidivism among its alcohol and other drug dependent community.

I'm suggesting a few ways that we can place more accountability onto offenders to be motivated to get sober or clean. Managing offenders effectively means there will be less victims of crime.

SCRAM CAM is a really innovative technology, yet its been around for almost 20 years. It has worked really well to get offenders sober in other jurisdictions; what works for some offenders won't work for others but we need to have a suite of options available for our courts.

Repeat drink drivers are a danger on our roads and their behaviour needs to be addressed. Rather than a fine (which almost 40% of drink drivers receive), we need to address the actual cause of their offending; drinking.

This approach can be used for a range of criminals where alcohol is a consistent factor in their offending. Other jurisdictions find it works extremely well in reducing domestic violence situations, including reducing that crime by up to 9% which is unheard of. I think all options should be on the table to reduce crime, at least to conduct a pilot or trial."

Further info: [UK AAMR Strategic Overview](#) (See Appendix C for case study)

Office of Stuart Grimley Media Contact:

Callum Whitehead / 0437 096 982 / callum.whitehead@parliament.vic.gov.au