

Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Select Committee inquiry into “Ice”

Question on Notice

The Committee understands that clandestine laboratories represent a serious public and environmental health risk. Can you provide any information regarding:

- *The primary health risks associated with clandestine laboratories;*

ACC Response:

The highly flammable, corrosive and toxic gases, chemicals and equipment used in clandestine laboratories are extremely dangerous and pose severe health risks not only to the occupants of the premises, but also emergency services personnel and front line responders. The greatest immediate risks are chemical burns and respiratory damage if persons are exposed to the release of reagents or the by-products from chemical fires and explosions at clandestine laboratory sites

Further questions on the health impacts associated with clandestine laboratories should be directed to relevant health agencies.

- *Whether any consideration has been given to the development of national guidelines and public information regarding clandestine drug laboratory remediation;*

ACC Response:

In 2011 the ACC and the federal Attorney-Generals Department, developed the *Clandestine Drug Laboratory Remediation Guidelines* with the assistance of industry and government specialists. The document is intended to provide guidance to authorities and environmental professionals in the assessment and remediation of contaminated sites, associated with the manufacture of illicit drugs. Particular emphasis in the guidelines has been directed to the materials, practices and by-products associated with the manufacture of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS), principally methylamphetamine in order to reflect the nature and prevalence of clandestine laboratories seized by Australian law enforcement agencies.

The guidelines are designed to provide a framework for the key issues that need to be considered throughout remediation programs, and aim to ensure that every effort is made to protect human and environmental health. A copy of the guidelines have been provided to the “Ice” Select Committee with this response.

- *What public and environmental health risks are associated with drugs produced via the ‘shake and bake’ method.*

ACC Response:

The ‘Shake and bake’ or ‘one pot’ method’ is highly volatile and poses a serious danger to the individuals involved, first responders and the broader community from explosions, fires, and exposure to dangerous chemicals.

The chemical reaction inside the container causes an extremely high amount of pressure to build within the container after being shaken and becomes very volatile. The concentration of products builds up the pressure within the sealed container which can create a rupture or bursting of the container, exposing the ingredients within to the air. Beyond the damage from the bursting container, exposure of items such as Lithium to the air then creates further explosive danger.

The used “one pot” containers are often abandoned filled with toxic chemical residue once the manufacture process is complete. Aside from the environmental impact of dumping dangerous chemicals and residues in drains, rivers, public parks and on roadsides, these containers also pose a risk to any individual who encounters them.

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Mr WOOD: Hamish, the other issue is importation of the drug, not only precursors. The amount of drug imported compared to what is produced in Australia, is it greater or smaller?

Mr HANSFORD: I will get you the actual numbers.

ACC Response:

The Australian methylamphetamine market has traditionally been supplied by domestic production, however, since 2010 there has been an increase in imported methylamphetamine, particularly ice, with a considerable increase in the number and weight of detections at the Australian border.

The 2013-14 Illicit Drug Data Report (IDDR) reports the number of border detections of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), excluding MDMA, at 2,367 detections, the highest number on record. The weight of detections was 1812.4 kilograms, the second highest weight on record.

Domestically there were a record 26,805 ATS seizures in 2013-14, weighing a total of 4,076 kilograms.

Due to the nature of illicit markets, we are unable to accurately quantify the size or proportion of the national methylamphetamine market attributed to domestic production and importation. The ACC assesses that the proportion of methylamphetamine supply met by importations is increasing—largely due to the popularity of crystal methylamphetamine—but believe that domestic manufacture continues to supply the majority of the market, albeit at a reduced level.