The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Ref: JO/cs

30 April 2015

Mr Nathan Barrett MLA
Chair
'Ice' Select Committee
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Mr Barrett

I refer to your letter of 31 March 2015 to David Quilty inviting the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to make a submission to the 'Ice' Select Committee on the impacts and government responses to the use of the drug known as 'ice' in the Northern Territory (NT). Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Select Committee inquiry. The Guild's response relate to the Terms of Reference (d) and (e) which are of particular relevance to community pharmacy.

Prevention, education and treatment support

The Guild supports an education and awareness campaign program in the NT involving community pharmacy staff and consumers. Given the impact of ice use can have on communities and individuals, such a campaign needs to address prevention, intervention, treatment, research and education, particularly targeting individuals who are at high risk of illicit drug use and dependence. Any campaigns and resource materials should be promoted through community pharmacy so that consumers have easy access to this important health information.

Trafficking, manufacture and derivation from legal pharmaceuticals

The Guild is committed to addressing the seriousness of methamphetamine production, and believes that pharmacists play a vital role in harm minimisation and the prevention of illicit diversion of the methamphetamine precursor pseudoephedrine, contained in some common cough and cold medicines.

One of the Guild initiatives to reduce access to products used in the manufacture of illicit drugs is Project STOP. Since 2007 many pharmacies around Australia have been a part of Project STOP, a real time recording dispensary software program. The system records all requests for products containing pseudoephedrine within a pharmacy, and alerts law endorsement authorities to suspicious transactions. Approximately 80 per cent of pharmacies nationally are using Project STOP and during 2014 a total of 2,232,281 sales were recorded nationally and of those 17,997 were denied sales. In the NT 94% of community pharmacies are using Project STOP and during 2014 a total of 25,809 sales were recorded and of those 890 were either denied, safety sales or unknown.

Real time online recording of pseudoephedrine sales is mandatory for community pharmacies in some Australian jurisdictions, such as Qld, WA and SA. In April 2008 the Northern Territory government regulated the recording of pseudoephedrine sales under paragraph 28(1)(b) of the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act*. However, while the regulation includes identification document requirement for the consumer and mandatory recording of the sale, electronic recording or real time online recording are not specified.

It is vital that real time recording is mandated in all jurisdictions so that we have a uniform national approach to this important law enforcement and community protection measure. Therefore, the Guild urge the government to mandate the use of an online real-time recording and monitoring platform such as Project STOP in Northern Territory with appropriate funding to maximise its effectiveness as a law enforcement tool against the ice epidemic.

Uniform legislation that mandates the use of a single online reporting tool will improve accurate data collection on pseudoephedrine-based product sales, which will reduce the diversion of this precursor chemical from community pharmacies. It would disrupt the manufacture and supply of methamphetamine in Australia, as well as allowing the continued legitimate access by consumers to this effective medicine.

I trust that our submission is useful in assisting the Committee with its inquiry into the illicit use of the drug known as "Ice" in the Northern Territory. We look forward to hearing from you of the outcome in due course. If you require further information or any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me or the Branch Director Ms Judith Oliver on 08 8944 6900.

Yours sincerely

Terry Battalis
President
Northern Territory Branch