



# Northern Territory Police

Submission

to the

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

'Ice'

**SELECT COMMITTEE**

## Table of Contents

Committee Terms of Reference .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Recommendations .....	5
Introduction.....	6
Reliability of Data Collection.....	7
Data Reliability.....	7
The Sources of Ice .....	8
The Suppliers.....	8
Organised Crime and Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs.....	8
Small Syndicates .....	8
User / Dealer.....	9
The Supply Routes .....	9
Social and Community Impacts of Ice .....	10
Meth Users .....	10
User Types .....	10
Social Users .....	10
Functional Users .....	11
Dependant Users .....	11
User Demographics .....	11
Prevalence of ATS and Ice in the Northern Territory .....	12
Community Impact.....	13
Government Responses to the abuse of 'Ice' in the Northern Territory.....	15
Government and Community Response in Other States.....	18
Best Practice Work Place Health and Safety Measure for Those Who Come in to Contact with Ice Users .....	19

## Annexures

- A** Current Intelligence Report: ATS, 16 April 2015
- B** ATS Related Deaths NT: 1 Aug 2013 – 16 Apr 2015
- C** Strategic Foundations to reduce drug abuse in the Northern Territory
- D** Put the heat on Ice – Public Flyers
- E** Break the Meth Spell – Public Flyers
- F** NT Police Methamphetamine Action Plan 2015-2016

## **Committee Terms of Reference**

The Committee will investigate and report on:

- a. The reliability of government data on Ice use and measures to enhance the collection of data to ensure that the scale of the problem and its impacts on the health, justice, drug and alcohol, and law enforcement efforts of the Northern Territory Government are understood and measured as accurately as possible;
- b. A comprehensive survey of the various government responses to the abuse of Ice in the Northern Territory and assess their effectiveness or otherwise;
- c. The social and community impacts of Ice in urban, community and remote settings;
- d. Government and community responses to Ice use in other states and some assessment of the effectiveness of these responses in terms of prevention, education, family and individual support and withdrawal and treatment modalities;
- e. The sources of Ice including cross border trafficking, local manufacture and derivation from legal pharmaceuticals and other legal precursors; and
- f. Best practice work place health and safety measures for those in the health system who come into contact with users of Ice.

In consideration of these matters, the Committee should:

- a. Consult widely with Territorians and those organisations and professionals with experience in Ice use;
- b. Consider best practice models for effective early education, prevention, containment, treatment and withdrawal strategies; and
- c. Seek the advice and experience of other jurisdictions regarding the options, costs and effectiveness of government and community approaches.

## **Executive Summary**

This submission addresses the terms of reference provided by the Select Committee; this section summarises the main issues raised in the Northern Territory (NT) Police submission:

- At a national level there is sufficient quantitative data to identify that nationally the use of methamphetamine has remained steady; however there has been a noticeable change in the type of substance used, from powder to the crystallised form, colloquially known as Ice.
- There are gaps in data collection with a significant amount of information being anecdotal in nature. This is a common occurrence with the emergence of any new illicit drug and information will only move from being anecdotal to evidence based over time.
- The NT has experienced an increase in the prevalence of Ice use and manufacture. However, whether this increase is higher than the national data is unable to be determined as many of the indicators are from unregulated and informal data sources.
- There is no evidence to suggest that Ice use is present in the majority of remote communities. Current information suggests that Ice use is at this time limited to the major urban centres of the NT.
- NT Police have at an operational level seen an increase in the detection of Clandestine Laboratories and the possession and use of Ice. Anecdotal data also indicates that Ice use can be associated with a range of offences committed in the greater Darwin region.
- Amphetamine Type Substances (ATS) seizures have increased annually since 2012.
- A significant number of offences that are investigated by the Serious and Major Crime Squads (NT Police) appears to either be directly or indirectly associated with ATS use.
- 10% of all Information Reports submitted to NT Police over a three year period relate to ATS.
- The establishment of a Commonwealth and Territory multi-agency taskforce will provide support to any Territory specific strategy through the provision of additional support which focuses on the identification and targeting of suppliers and their supply routes at a national and international level.
- Ice use poses a significant risk of harm to the NT community. This risk can be mitigated through a co-ordinated whole of government approach that focuses on harm reduction, demand reduction, and supply reduction.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are suggested for consideration by the Select Committee

1. That NT agencies work collaboratively to develop mechanisms and data sets which enable accurate and reliable reporting on Ice use, its prevalence and impact across the NT.
2. That all legislative amendments proposed by NT Police to assist in the disruption and dismantling of drug supply, supply routes, distribution networks and referred to throughout this submission are supported and enacted as a matter of priority to support operational priorities.
3. That an holistic approach is adopted to address the social and community impacts of ice use, incorporating integration and multi-faceted approaches which bring together the various Government and Non-Government Agencies who have an inevitable role to play in the provision of Demand Reduction, Harm Reduction, and Supply Reduction services.
4. That the Committee note that NT Police, Australian Federal Police, Australian Crime Commission and the Customs and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service joint agency Taskforce Nemesis, will use its combined resources to identify, disrupt and dismantle criminal networks who import drugs, firearms and crime enabling commodities in to Australia and the NT.
5. That the Committee note that NT Police will contribute to the recently formed 'national ice taskforce' and continues to monitor review initiatives undertaken at a State and Federal level to combat Ice use, supply and manufacture.
6. That where practicable protocols are established and information shared to ensure that all Government and Non-Government agencies who come in to contact with Ice users, are operating in an environment where the highest possible work health safety standards are maintained and the risks to the individual are minimised.

## **Introduction**

The use of illicit drugs and misuse of licit substances is a social issue that impacts on every community where it occurs. Although only a small proportion of people in our community use illicit drugs, the harms to the user, their family, associates, and the wider community are significant and can be devastating.

In Australia, at a National, State and Territory level, grave concerns are being expressed by members of the community, government agencies and non-government organisations about the current extent of methamphetamine use and its impact.

Methamphetamine (methyl amphetamine hydrochloride) or 'Ice' as is colloquially known, is scheduled in the highest category of prohibited drugs in every Australian jurisdiction. It is one of many drugs within the amphetamine type substances (ATS) group which also include amphetamine, methyl amphetamine and phenethylamines. (Australian Crime Commission 2014).

Ice is not a 'new' drug. Health and law enforcement officials and policy makers have developed a multitude of responses following evidence of increases in the manufacture, supply and use of amphetamines (especially in youth), and the emergence of crystal methamphetamine in the 1990's.

A significant change in the illicit drug landscape however was the emergence of crystal methamphetamine and its saturation into broader drug using cohorts. Where ecstasy and similar stimulants have been seen as a drug associated with those who attend rave parties and the like, amphetamines were not aligned with any one class or cohort of users. Its market base was wide reaching, and has resulted in methamphetamines now being the second most commonly used illicit drug in Australia. (Department of Health and Ageing)

This increase in use has seen existing drug users transition to a point where they have become less 'social users' and more dependant users. The increased harms that are attributed to methamphetamine use have brought us to the point where methamphetamine, in particular Ice, has become a national priority.

It should be noted that while the intention of the submission is to focus on issues surrounding Ice, this cannot be done in isolation of other Amphetamine Type Substances (ATS) due to the similarities in seizure and use trends between Ice and other ATS. Often what is seized, sold or purported to be Ice will be another ATS or a non-ATS synthetic substance.

## **Reliability of Data Collection**

There are a number of nationally recognised reports that provide drug related data and which are used by the Northern Territory Police and other agencies to assist in determining prevalence of drug use in the Northern Territory, these include:

- The Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS)
- The National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)
- The Illicit Drug Data Report (IDDR)
- The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS)

In addition to data provided to the national reports listed above, NT Police also utilises or has access to data gathered from other sources from within Police and other NT Government agencies and non-government agencies.

This information includes operational reports, intelligence assessments, field intelligence reports, observations of front line operational police, data from hospital emergency departments and remote community clinics, and data from Alcohol and other Drug services.

### ***Data Reliability***

The majority of data contained and provided in the above listed reports is reliable. That said almost all the reports have limitations, particularly when attempting to measure the scale and impact of Ice on all elements of the NT community.

A great deal of the data collected does not specify between the different forms of methamphetamine use (powder, base, or crystallised [Ice]), some of the reports are sample based and are therefore not a true reflection of the NT community as the sampling is more urban focused and does not capture remote NT communities, and a great deal of data is provided by user surveys which can also be subject to inaccuracy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

That NT agencies work collaboratively to develop mechanisms and data sets which enable accurate and reliable reporting on Ice use, its prevalence and impact across the NT.

## **The Sources of Ice**

### ***The Suppliers***

#### ***Organised Crime and Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs***

There is strong evidence of organised crime and Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMCG) influence on the supply of ATS in the NT. Similarly in the other jurisdictions OMCGs hold a large market share of the illicit ATS supply network. In the NT, the increase in ATS supply has coincided with the increase of OMCG members whose numbers have increased from nine patched members associated with one club in 2011, to currently 31 patched members associated with six clubs.

There are currently only two OMCG clubs with Darwin chapters. Other clubs have a presence with members who live and work in the NT, however remain members of clubs interstate. Of significance is that for every patched member their surrounding network of associates, and associates of associates contribute to illicit activity.

In addition to OMCG there is intelligence to indicate the presence in the NT of other organised crime groups including some groups with South East Asian or Irish connections and to a lesser extent Middle Eastern crime groups.

#### ***Small Syndicates***

Whilst there is strong evidence of organised crime being behind ATS supply in the NT, there are a number of smaller, by convenience, syndicates that form to also facilitate the supply of ATS into the NT. These syndicates may not always have direct affiliations with local organised crime entities. These entities are known to pool their funds together and purchase drugs either locally or interstate for distribution amongst their group of users/friends.

This is quite profitable and it is not uncommon to find syndicates staying in local hotels and hiring cars for weeks at a time while plying their trade.

There are also syndicates or individuals who prey on other dealers. These people will source their drugs to sell by robbing or standing over other dealers. Occasionally, these matters are reported to police, when serious harm has occurred, however most are not reported for obvious reasons. As a means of prevention dealers are (increasingly) arming themselves with weapons or firearms and fortifying their premises.



## ***User / Dealer***

Ice use is expensive, so it is not uncommon for users to be dealers as well. Users purchase an ounce or two of Ice, separate into deals, and on sell to support their habits. Generally when the user is at this stage, they do not have employment and their survival depends on their trade in Ice or other crimes.

## ***The Supply Routes***

The vast majority of ATS for domestic use is transported into the NT from southern states. Regular intelligence and seizures of several ounces of ATS at a time support this view. There have been seizures of ATS from International sources however intelligence suggests that the majority of this is destined for interstate markets.

There is some illicit manufacture of ATS in the NT, as highlighted by the three recent illicit drug seizures in Alice Springs, however most are usually small labs with limited production capability.

The supply methods most commonly used by criminal networks for the transportation of ATS are:

- Vehicle traffic between jurisdictions;
- Interstate and International mail;
- Freight;
- Trucking companies; and
- Drug mules on commercial flights, often using internal concealment methods.

As law enforcement agencies at a national, state and territory level increase their presence and detection capabilities, criminal networks also increase their ability to develop new and innovative methods to transport illicit drugs in an attempt to avoid detection.

One of the key initiatives by law enforcement agencies in this area has been the introduction of multi-agency strike forces, comprised of Australian Federal Police, Australian Crime Commissioner, Customs and Border Protection, and State or Territory Police to specifically target, disrupt and dismantle organised criminal networks and their drug supply routes. Strike Force initiatives will be further discussed later in this paper under the 'NT Government agencies response to Ice use'.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

That all legislative amendments proposed by NT Police to assist in the disruption and dismantling of drug supply, supply routes, distribution networks and referred to throughout this submission are supported and enacted as a matter of priority to support operational priorities.

## Social and Community Impacts of Ice

### *Meth Users*

There is no one distinct category of a methamphetamine (meth) user. The pervasiveness of the drug is such that it is reasonable to expect to find meth users in any ethnic group, social class or profession.

The fact is that ATS are a drug that facilitates functionality (to a point) which means in many cases users can go undetected for significant periods. For many, the enabling effects are an attraction of the drug, particularly in today's society, as it enables users to 'continue to function in daily working life.'

The detrimental effects of addiction and chronic use is what brings the adverse 'public' reaction and outing of the user, this is often seen where the user has deconstructed to the point that they are then involved in an incident where Police interaction occurs.

### *User Types*

The National Psych stimulants Initiative (NPI), through Department of Health and Ageing, commissioned research into the type of users which saw classification of three distinct behavioural contexts:

1. Social Use: motivated by the disinhibitory effects of methamphetamines;
2. Functional Use: motivated by the enabling effects of methamphetamines; and
3. Dependent Use: motivated by the perception of normality from reliance on methamphetamines.

### **Social Users**

Social users will often come to the attention of police through monitoring and enforcement of drug supply and through association with known drug users and suppliers. It is at this stage that effective education and treatment referral has the greatest success opportunity, and Police will look to diversionary and other harm reduction options to facilitate the long term successful removal of illicit drug use.

Depending on the nature of other types of criminal offending undertaken in conjunction with this type of use, Police operational responses will be units that relate to drug squad, property crime, and general duty officers such as those managing entertainment beats.

### **Functional Users**

Functional users may also be detected through association with other users and suppliers, as usage increases greater access to product is required. This is where additional offending increases and interaction escalates.

Functional users are more likely to be affected for greater periods and will most likely begin working under the influence, and subsequently driving under the influence. They also begin to engage more with other people whilst meth affected. The potential for violence resulting from drug use increases the risk of harm to surrounding persons and greater likelihood of domestic and family violence.

A compounding issue is the use of other substances, such as cannabis and alcohol which assist in lessening some of the physical signs of being meth affected. Whilst the amphetamines in turn mask the effects of the depressants, the negative effects such as feelings of paranoia, depression and emotional outbursts are heightened, and when methamphetamine affected results in a greater over reaction to these feelings often involving violence.

### **Dependant Users**

Once a user becomes dependant we see further deconstruction of social supports for the individual, as they alienate away from non-users, and engage more with other users, thus normalising their actions.

User dependency will also result in an increase in offending and further expansion into supply and manufacture by the user. The increased offending generally leans towards drug dealing and a prevalence for property crime, violent and more weapon involved crime. Dependant users are often cultivated by other users and suppliers as part of strengthening criminal networks.

### **User Demographics**

Anecdotally the more predominate user group at present in the NT are Caucasian males and females between 18 to 40 years of age who reside in the larger urban centres of the NT.

There are a small number of Indigenous ATS and Ice users in the NT who are known to police. These persons generally reside in the larger urban centres and are amongst those with mixed heritage. There is however recent intelligence to

indicate that those with mixed heritage are using Ice in some of our remote communities.

There is also some intelligence that Indigenous community members from remote areas have tried ATS however it is not widespread at this time. Intelligence indicates that this is occurring in East Arnhem as well as the Tiwi Island regions.

A current limiting factor on the spread of ATS is the price of the product. However as the price of some ATS changes and becomes comparable to that of cannabis in some communities this may see a change in the demand levels in remote communities.

Heavy users of ATS need to support their habits by dealing the drug or through other crimes. In the remote communities these people come to notice more rapidly.

### ***Prevalence of ATS and Ice in the Northern Territory***

In Australia, the prevalence of drug use has been measured using surveys of the general population as well as within targeted groups. As previously mentioned in this submission these surveys include the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSH), the Ecstasy and Related Drug Reporting System (ERDRS), the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS), and the Drug Use Monitoring Australia (DUMA) program. These surveys, combined with information from local sources, also provide the base line for assessing the prevalence of ATS and Ice in the Northern Territory.

The 2013 NDSH estimates that 2.8% of the NT population aged 14 years and over had used some form of methamphetamine (including Ice) within the previous 12 months. This proportion has increased since the 2007 survey and declined compared with the 2004 survey. Nationally, use has remained stable since 2010 at 2.1% of the general population.

Similar data is also detailed in the 2013 Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS)<sup>1</sup> which interviewed 45 participants (31 male and 14 Female). The mean age of the participants was 25 years, approximately one third were born overseas, most were well educated, currently employed and had a high mean weekly income, none were presently in drug treatment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Whittaker, E. and Burns, L. (2014). NT Trends in Ecstasy and Related Drug Markets 2013. Findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS). *Australian Drug Trend Series No. 125*. Sydney, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Australia..

A summary of the EDRS report relating specifically to crystal methamphetamine or Ice use shows:

- one third of the sample had never used Ice and one fifth had done so recently;
- of those who had recently used Ice, it was used on a median of 3 days over the preceding six months and had been smoked by all participants; and
- The frequency and quantity of use appeared to return to levels previously observed in 2007.

At a local level there are diverging views on the prevalence of Ice in the NT community. From a NT Police perspective what can be seen, based on anecdotal information and internal data, is that:

- there has been an increase in ATS seizures annually since 2012;
- a significant number of offences investigated by the Serious and Major Crime squads appear to have some association with ATS use;
- a review of reportable deaths between August 2013 and April 2015 indicated that out of the 478 deaths examined, 19 (3.9%) had some association with ATS; and
- Frontline officer and community perception is that the use of Ice is common place within larger urban centres such as Darwin.

The data considered indicates that crystal methamphetamine (Ice) is replacing other ATS as the drug of choice with increasing frequency of use.

However as to the question of determining the extent to which Ice has infiltrated and impacted on the Territory community, this may take some time to answer, as we move from analysis of anecdotal information to analysis of evidence obtained over a longer period of time.

To understand the scope of the problem and to address the divergent views held by the various NT agencies, the establishment of appropriate data sets and development of a baseline from which to measure future action and results is essential.

### ***Community Impact***

The social, economic and environmental impacts of Ice usage at a national level are well researched, documented and recorded. Anex (2014) and Nicosia et al (2009), in their submissions to the Victorian Government inquiry into

methamphetamine, observed that the consequences of methamphetamine use are considerable as they not only impact on the individual user but also their family, friends and the wider community.

Individual users may well lose the ability to make a positive contribution to their community due to the drug's damaging effect on their health, education, relationships, and employability.

These factors are compounded when considered at the wider community level, when methamphetamine use is associated with criminal activities including stealing, crimes of violence, domestic violence, and general public disorder.

A further impact identified by Anex (2014) and seen on those communities that have been reputed, rightly or wrongly to be 'Ice hot spots', is the negative impact on tourism, business viability and general community amenity.

Increased illicit drug use also impacts heavily on a range of community groups and service providers, including but not limited to, ambulance services, hospital Emergency Departments, police, and community sector organisations (suicide prevention, mental health, community legal aid services).

From a NT Police and general law enforcement perspective one of the difficult areas to determine impact is that of remote communities. This difficulty presents because of the absence of reliable data, and because there are very few illicit drugs used in community that are comparable to Ice.

However, if one were to draw parallels to the effects that the illicit use of marijuana has had on the majority of remote communities, the prognosis of Ice taking hold as a drug of choice in any remote community in the NT is disastrous.

Although best answered by other agencies, the harsh reality for the majority of remote communities is that there is very little in terms of support and infrastructure to assist any community should it find itself the victim of widespread Ice addiction. Indeed one consequence that would be foreseeable is an increase in all crime types and community harms that are detailed in the preceding paragraphs.

At present the NT Police have not seen any specific indicators that Ice has become a regular drug commodity in remote communities, nor have we seen in our major centres the widespread addictive behaviours that are so commonly associated with Ice use.

What we have seen is an increase in its prevalence and use. NT Police, in collaboration with NT and national partners, will champion efforts to minimise the impact of Ice on the NT community.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

That an holistic approach is adopted to address the social and community impacts of Ice use, incorporating integration and multi-faceted approaches which bring together the various Government and Non-Government Agencies who have an inevitable role to play in the provision of Demand Reduction, Harm Reduction, and Supply Reduction services.

## **Government Responses to the abuse of 'Ice' in the Northern Territory**

Currently, NT Police is involved in two interagency groups addressing the impact of methamphetamine use in the NT.

One is focussed on the development of methamphetamine/Ice prevention and educational resources. Partners with NT Police include, Department of Health, Amity Community Services, Danila Dilba, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT).

The second working group is comprised of DoH and NT Police. This group is concerned with all illicit drug use given the high incidence of poly drug use, however there is a particular focus on methamphetamine supply, use, harm, and treatment. This group meets quarterly to share information and discuss strategies related to:

- arrest and seizure rates;
- patterns of drug use including drug type, volume and length of use;
- National strategies and approaches;
- availability and type of treatment options;
- community based efforts to address impact of illicit drug use; and
- increases in usage in particular urban, regional and/or remote areas.

NT Police are currently involved in a number of national and locally focused initiatives to respond to the increasing use of Ice in the Northern Territory.

These include:

- Working towards the development and implementation of a National electronic End User Declaration (eEUD) system. This provides for the reporting of specific chemical, combinations of chemical or other equipment that have been identified as potential ingredients or precursors in the manufacture of illegal drugs.
- Continued participation for project STOP which commenced in 2005, and provides a technological solution that enables pharmacists to record and reference sales of pseudoephedrine products. The data, graphically depicted via Global Positioning System (GPS), provides for real-time reference of sale activity. Law enforcement and health regulators assess the data for inappropriate patterns of use, with law enforcement targeting pseudoephedrine 'runners' who source product for diversion into illicit drug manufacture. This system has been successful in the NT in identifying a number of illicit laboratories. There are currently discussions nationally about the future of this project however NT Police support its retention.
- Ongoing participation in the National Task Force targeting OMCG, which provides an effective platform for a coordinated and collaborative national action against OMCGs that presents a risk within a jurisdiction in support of the National Anti-Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs Strategy. The Task Force is comprised of members from all states and territories anti-gang squads, in addition to the AFP, ACC, ATO, ASIC, Austrac and Customs (amongst others). Its core objective is the detection, disruption and dismantling of OMCGs in Australia. This is in keeping with the current strategic aim of the NT Police Drug and Organised Crime OMCG strategy.

Perhaps the most significant initiative by NT Police in demonstrating its commitment to reducing the prevalence and impact of Ice on the NT community is the development and implementation of Task Force Nemesis.

Task Force Nemesis is an initiative by the Northern Territory Police to combat the emerging issue of ATS and methyl amphetamine substances, in particular Ice.

The introduction of Task Force Nemesis will see:

1. The Development, implementation and operationalization of the NT methyl amphetamine action plan.
2. The formation of a multi-agency joint organised crime Task Force, comprised of NT Police, Australian Federal Police, Australian Crime Commission and Australian Customs and Border Protection, with a



specific reference to focus on Ice and other amphetamine type substances.

3. The development of multiagency working groups within the NT to promote and lead a whole-of-government response to methyl amphetamine. This group will include representation from Department of Health and Department of Education.
4. The proposal of legislative reforms aimed at : enhancing chemical precursor control, protecting children from exposure to hazards associated with drug production, increased harm reduction through random drug testing of all motor vehicle drivers; enhanced disruption of distribution networks by introducing legislation regulating know 'drug routes'.
5. Development of local communications strategies to raise public awareness of harms associated with the abuse of methyl amphetamine. This initiative will include specific strategies to communicate with regional and remote communities.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

That the Committee note that the NT Police, Australian Federal Police, Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service joint agency Task Force Nemesis, will to use its combined resources to identify, disrupt and dismantle criminal networks who import drugs, firearms and crime enabling commodities in to Australia and the NT.

The NT Police have drafted a Methyl-amphetamine Action Plan. Its key objectives are:

- To understand the scope and impact of the ATS problem through research and information gathering;
- Reduce the Harm that ATS use has on the community;
- Work with external agencies to reduce the demand for ATS within the community;
- Reduce the supply of ATS to the community through targeting suppliers, traffickers and distribution networks;
- The hosting of a NT Drug Summit to provide key stakeholders the opportunity to assist in identifying the scope and impact of the problem in the Northern Territory and to assist in developing whole of community solutions to the problem.

NT Police has also proposed a number of amendments to existing legislative provisions to assist in the addressing the impact of Ice on the NT community, these include:

- Amendments to the *Firearms Act*, to remedy existing offence and penalty deficiencies, and develop Firearm Prohibition Orders. These orders will prohibit the possession of firearms, increase penalties for accessing and using illegal firearms, and increase search provisions for law enforcement when upholding law against a person subject to a Firearm Prohibition Order.
- Amendments to the *Misuse of Drugs Act* to capture aggravation offences, including Manufacture with Child present, Dangerous Drug offences where firearm/ weapons are involved or used.
- Amendments to the *Serious Crime Control Act* to increase responses available law enforcement when dealing with organisations or entities that comprise criminal offending as part of their activities. and
- Amendments to the *Criminal Code Act*, to capture relevant aggravations that are to apply to violent or drug offences, and remedy existing consorting legislation.

## **Government and Community Response in Other States**

In April this year, Prime Minister Tony Abbott launched a national task force to address the issue of Ice across the States and Territories. The group, to be led by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police Ken Lay APM, will help coordinate and assess local, state and federal government efforts to address the drug, and identify ways to improve education, health and law enforcement. In light of this announcement it is likely that more concerted and focused efforts to deal with Ice in our communities will occur both locally and nationally.

Victoria recently released their Ice Action Plan pledging \$45.5 million to reduce the supply, demand and harm of Ice and offered their support to the announcement of the national taskforce.

Similarly in Western Australia a joint State and Federal Police taskforce targeting methamphetamine was announced. Other States have various programs and initiatives in place to deal with methamphetamine use and addiction.

It can be anticipated that as a result of the recent heightened level of attention, we will see further developments across the country in respect of action plans, treatment programs and service provision for Ice.

From a law enforcement perspective all law enforcement agencies at a national and federal level have developed or are in the process of developing strategies to combat the prevalence and impact of Ice on their communities.

These strategies are consistent with the three 'pillars' of the National Drug Strategy 2010 – 2015, which are:

- *Demand reduction – prevent uptake of illicit drugs*
- *Supply reduction – prevent production and supply of illicit drugs*
- *Harm reduction – reduce adverse health and social consequences of illicit drug use*

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

That the Committee note that the NT Police will contribute to the recently formed 'national ice taskforce' and continues to monitor and review initiatives undertaken at a State and Federal level to combat Ice use, supply and manufacture.

### **Best Practice Work Place Health and Safety Measure for Those Who Come in to Contact with Ice Users**

NT Police members are guided by Police General Orders and policies when dealing with any offender.

There are specific provisions of the NT Police General Order - Custody for dealing with those "at risk" in custody which may be that the offender is under the influence and effects of illicit drugs. Those provisions provide guidance to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those persons who come into Police custody affected by such substances.

In terms of police frontline members' safety, there are no specific policies relating to illicit drugs users, however training is provided for dealing with persons who are suffering from mental illness. Frontline members are trained to deal with situations as they arise and utilise the learnings from their Operational Skills and Tactics training.

Ice dealers and users may be prone to violent and irrational behaviour, where a search warrant is deemed "High Risk", following a risk assessment; the services of the Tactical Response Group (TRG) are regularly engaged to conduct entries on premises or effect arrests. This is often due to the risk of firearms and / or weapons and the need to protect member safety in the carrying out of their duties.

In the broader sense, NT Police work alongside medical service providers, St John's Ambulance, Emergency Departments of Territory Hospitals to ensure that those affected by illicit drugs are managed appropriately and in the most secure and safe manner for all persons within the existing and well tested protocols.

An additional factor for NT Police in regard to Ice is the dangers that are presented to officers when identifying and dismantling clandestine laboratories.

The number of illicit drug laboratories detected nationally has more than doubled over the last decade, increasing from 358 in 2003–04 to 757 in 2012–13<sup>2</sup>. In the past twelve months (to February 2015), 17 labs<sup>3</sup> have been detected by NT Police. Of these a quarter were classified as Class A – active labs where the process is underway and at its most volatile.

Manufacturers or 'Drug Cooks' vary in their professionalism and capability. Many are self-taught or have learnt the skills from other cooks. Very few have any formal chemistry training and this makes them particularly dangerous to the community as they do not fully appreciate the hazards they are creating for themselves or the community.

As law enforcement concentrate on known methods, new methods are continually being developed by drug cooks. In the past it would take several days for a 'cook' to be completed, whereas today they can be completed in a number of hours using rather simple methods. Whilst the methods may be simple they are often extremely dangerous.

Ramifications of these rapid production methods are that they are extremely volatile and have the potential to explode, should this occur, then the location becomes a chemical hazard zone that requires decontamination. Decontamination should be completed at any lab site as often poisonous gases are produced, resulting in a wider contamination of the premises.

Dependent on the size of the equipment and types of chemicals used, potentially that could mean the destruction of a residence. If this were to occur in an air ducted hotel room the ramifications could be disastrous for the guests and hotel owner.

Legislation has been proposed to have an aggravation added to the *Misuse of Drugs Act* to deter drug manufacturers from using hotels or residences.

The recent detection of illicit laboratories in Alice Springs residential properties has raised the issue of chemical hazards and the potential harm to occupants of the residence. NT Police have been consulting with the Department of Health in developing appropriate responses / protocols to these incidents to minimise any

---

<sup>2</sup> Australian Crime Commission, Illicit Drug Data Report.

<sup>3</sup> Source – Drug and Organised Crime Squad.

further harm to residents. This is in its infancy and may require legislative changes to ensure site rehabilitation occurs.

As evidenced in the above paragraphs, by their very nature these labs create an extremely dangerous environment for the community and police officers. To ensure best practice and officer safety, standard operating procedures for NT Police are that the response to any suspected clan lab is undertaken by a team who have had specialised training and have access to specialist equipment, with support of the Forensic Services and the NT Fire and Rescue Service if necessary.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

That where practicable protocols are established and information shared to ensure that all Government and Non-Government agencies who come in to contact with Ice users, are operating in an environment where the highest possible work health safety standards are maintained and the risks to the individual are minimised.