

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Bailey

to Minister for Health, Family and Children's Services

Treatment Programs for Heroin and other Drug Users

1. In 1996, how many deaths occurred in the NT because of -
 - (i) heroin;
 - (ii) all other opiates; and
 - (iii) all other illegal drugs.
2. Did any deaths occur from marijuana in the NT in 1996.
3. How many deaths occurred in the NT during 1996, in which illegal drugs were a contributing factor, but were not listed as the cause of death.
4. How many drug overdose cases were admitted to all NT Public Hospitals during 1996 and what were their ages.
5. What education programs is the Government undertaking and how much time is allocated to such programs -
 - (i) in schools, to inform and teach young people about addiction and illegal drugs; and
 - (ii) outside schools, to inform and teach young people about addiction and illegal drugs.
6. During 1996, what programmes were available for heroin dependent people and the conditions for admission to each program. For each program, please advise the number of people who -
 - (i) commenced;
 - (ii) completed; or
 - (iii) were denied participation.
7. What is the current status for the use of methadone in the NT.
8. Is methadone available under any circumstances to people who are heroin users. If so -
 - (i) how many people are on this program;
 - (ii) is there a waiting list for people waiting to get on this program;
 - (iii) are there any people being denied treatment under this program; and
 - (iv) what are the conditions for placement into this program.
9. What other programs are currently available, or are being considered, for heroin dependent people.

10. During 1996 what was the cost in the NT for administering illicit drug laws. Please break down these costs into amounts for -
- (i) Police;
 - (ii) legal system (including DPP, the Courts and Legal Aid);
 - (iii) hospital services provided by the NT Government;
 - (iv) other medical services provided by the NT Government; and
 - (v) administrative services.
11. What proportion of those people in prison in the NT are there for reasons directly attributable to illegal drugs and what proportion are there for reasons indirectly attributable to illegal drugs.

ANSWER

When answering please return 2 copies to The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

See Attachment.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION NO 54

- 1-3 Morbidity data is collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Information about drug related deaths in 1996 in the Northern Territory (NT) is not currently available as there may be outstanding Inquests.
4. There were 255 out of a total of 54,691 admissions to NT public hospitals in 1996, who had been poisoned by either illicit drugs or medicinal substances. The average age of these patients at the time of admission was 28.6 years. Their ages varied from 0-87 years. In 1996, 17 patients were admitted to hospital for poisoning by opiates or related narcotics. 4 indicated methadone or heroin was the agent, 13 others codeine, pethidine, morphine.
5. The Government is undertaking a range of drug and alcohol education programs.
- (i) Programs in schools include specially developed curricula in primary and secondary schools. The recommended minimum time for health education in years T-7 is forty minutes per week. The recommended minimum time allocation for health education in years 8-10 is eighty hours in total over the three years.

These hours can include the following programs: the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program run by community based police in primary schools; Implementing the Common Curriculum in Aboriginal Schools - Health Education Primary (ICCAS) units of work; new teaching resources developed through the National Initiative in Drug Education (NIDE); Australian Sport Drugs Agency materials that have been developed for school use; and Life Education health and drug education programs in primary schools. Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (ADS) provides drug inservices to school nurses, counsellors and youth workers on request.

- (ii) Education outside schools includes media campaigns, sponsorships and events such as the Rock Eisteddfod and Choose Yourself which promote health messages. ADS in Darwin and Central Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (CAAODS) in Alice Springs provide counselling for young people on drug issues and are available to speak to community groups

and to provide parent information. Government funded alcohol and drug agencies such as the Drug and Alcohol Services Association (DASA) in Alice Springs and Amity House in Darwin also provide drug related information.

6. A therapeutic program specifically for drug dependent people is managed at Banyan House. Admission criteria for Banyan House are: a history of drug misuse; aged 17 or over; and a commitment to become involved in the therapeutic community and to a drug free lifestyle. Clients with major mental illness are not eligible.
 - (i) In 1996, 57 people entered the therapeutic community at Banyan House. 47 were admitted for opiate dependency. 40 were also polydrug users with opiates as the principal drug.
 - (ii) Two people completed the program (generally around 6 months duration) and a further thirteen left by mutual agreement (generally because the program no longer meets the client needs).
 - (iii) No one who met the criteria was denied participation.

Medical detoxification from narcotics and other drugs is available in the Darwin Detoxification Unit. In 1996/97 there were 148 admissions to the Detoxification Unit. Of these 6 presented with opiate dependency as the primary drug, a further 24 were polydrug users, in which opiates was one drug of choice. Non medical detoxification can be undertaken as DASA in Alice Springs. Detoxification can also be undertaken at public hospitals. Outpatient counselling is available. General practitioners also provide services to this client group.

7. Refer to the attached Ministerial Guidelines for Methadone under section 31A of the NT *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act*.
8. Refer to the attached Guidelines.
 - (i) This figure is variable over time. As at 26 November 1997, eight people are attending the Alcohol and Other Drug Services in Darwin following approval under the Guidelines to receive methadone treatment for narcotic addiction.
 - (ii) There is no waiting list for people who are eligible under the Guidelines.
 - (iii) Patients who do not fit the Guidelines are ineligible to receive treatment with methadone.
 - (iv) Refer to the attached Guidelines.
9. See question 6.
- 10 (i - iv) Administering illicit drug laws is undertaken as part of the general business of a number of government agencies and costings are not segregated.
11. This should be referred to the appropriate Minister.