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CHIEF EXECUTIVE*

Our Ref: 15/119376

Your Ref:

Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine

The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the adverse comment received by the committee in a submission to the Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine.

The ACC stands by the use of the term pandemic to describe the situation in which Australia currently finds itself in relation to methylamphetamine.

The academic literature contains many references to epidemics in relation to illicit drugs, and it is not uncommon for the term to be used in the context that it was used by the ACC. In the ACC's view, the term epidemic refers to the rapid spread among illicit drug users of an illicit substance that suddenly becomes readily available, and the term pandemic describes the broad geographic spread of the phenomenon.

The methylamphetamine market has experienced significant growth in recent years, both in terms of reported users, and availability. According to the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, at least 200,000 Australians were using crystal methylamphetamine in 2013 compared to less than 100,000 in 2007. Arrests, border detections, and domestic seizures relating to methamphetamine continue to rise; with those reported in the 2013–14 Illicit Drug Data Report the highest on record.

This growth can be attributed to increased user demand, the role of serious and organised criminal infiltration of the Australian market. The ACC's previous reporting has indicated that more than 60 per cent of Australia's highest risk criminal targets are involved in the methylamphetamine market. Classified intelligence reporting disseminated within law enforcement also continues to highlight the penetration of the Australian market by serious and organised criminal entities. The growth can also be attributed to the highly lucrative nature of the Australian market, combined with the availability and relatively low cost of methylamphetamine internationally.

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The ACC has assessed that crystal methamphetamine poses—by far—the greatest threat to the Australian public of all illicit drug types, and by a significant margin. It impacts every Australian jurisdiction and is a problem that is characterised by increasing demand, supply and harms. The ACC assesses, based on the statistical picture, open source information as well as operational and strategic intelligence collected by the ACC and law enforcement, that the methamphetamine market will likely continue to expand in the medium term.

The rapid spread of ice has also been evidenced through consultations with many communities across Australia, particularly in regional and rural areas, including among disadvantaged sections of the community.

The ACC uses its language advisedly to convey accurately the nature, extent and implications of the methamphetamine threat. Subsequent public debate and discussion has led to an appropriate national response through the establishment of both the National Ice Taskforce, and the Inquiry of this committee into crystal methamphetamine.

The ACC will continue to support the work of the committee and would welcome discussing any of these matters with the committee in greater detail.

Should your office require any further information please contact Hamish Hansford, hamish.hansford@acc.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Chris Dawson APM
Chief Executive Officer

16 July 2015