

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Crystal Methamphetamine

24 March 2017

Question no: 2

Topic: Harm reduction measures

Type of Question: Written

Chair: Mr Kelly

Question:

Critics of the NIAS argue it was largely absent harm reduction measures.

- i. How is the Commonwealth supporting harm reduction in its national drug strategy?
- ii. How will the upcoming national drug strategy continue to 'rebalance the pillars' and direct Australia's national strategy away from a law enforcement approach to a health focused approach?

Answer:

The Government's approach to dealing with alcohol and other drugs follows the overarching framework set out by the National Drug Strategy 2010- 2015 (the Strategy) which is underpinned by the three pillars of demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction which are applied together to minimise harm. The Strategy strives for a balanced, evidence based approach to tackling drug use in the community that incorporates law enforcement, prevention, early intervention and health care strategies.

Australia's National Drug Strategy continues to focus on the strong partnership between health and law enforcement. This is a key strength of the National Drug Strategy, and is central to the harm minimisation approach. Once finalised, the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 will provide a national framework which identifies national priorities relating to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, guides action by governments in partnership with service providers and the community, and outlines a national commitment to harm minimisation through balanced adoption of effective demand, supply and harm reduction strategies.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Crystal Methamphetamine

24 March 2017

Question no: 3

Topic: Decriminalisation

Type of Question: Written

Chair: Mr Kelly

Question:

The committee has heard from a number of submitters that illicit drugs are a health issue, not a law enforcement issue. Subsequently, advocates argue that decriminalisation of illicit drugs and progressing harm reduction measures will be more effective than pursuing a law enforcement approach.

i. Would you like to respond?

ii. The NIAS states there will be a national review of drug diversionary programs. Can you provide us with an update on this review?

Answer:

The Australian Government's primary policy on alcohol and other drug use is the National Drug Strategy. The Strategy builds on a longstanding balanced partnership between the health and law enforcement sectors, using evidence-based and evidence-informed practice. The current strategy aims to build safe and healthy communities by minimising alcohol tobacco and other drug-related health, social and economic harms among individuals, families and communities.

On behalf of jurisdictions, Western Australia Police have finalised an options paper on the review of Police Drug Diversionary Programs for advice to the National Drug Strategy Committee (NDSC) and the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum. This review is part of the NDSC's current work plan. The NDSC will consider the options paper at its next meeting.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Crystal Methamphetamine

24 March 2017

Question no: 4

Topic: National Surveillance System for Alcohol and other Drug Misuse and Overdose

Type of Question: Written

Chair: Mr Kelly

Question:

Can you explain how the National Surveillance System for Alcohol and other Drug Misuse and Overdose will work?

Will the DoH be responsible for managing this system?

When will it be operational?

Will law enforcement agencies have access to this system?

Answer:

The national surveillance system for alcohol and other drug misuse and overdose (the ambulance project) commenced on 1 July 2016 and will include data from 1 January 2016. The system is funded by the Department of Health (the Department) and managed by Turning Point, a specialist drug and alcohol organisation that is formally affiliated with Monash University.

The system allows for the coding and analysis of ambulance attendances for Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania and the provision of detailed information on those ambulance attendances associated with alcohol and other drug misuse, including overdose, in those jurisdictions. Data for Victoria are coded for each month, whereas data for Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania are coded for one month of each quarter. Data from other jurisdictions will be added in the future should data collection methods in those jurisdictions allow.

Information collected in relation to each attendance includes:

- drug type;
- geographic location and type of location;
- time of day and day of the week;
- demographic details of the patient;
- outcome; and
- whether police co-attended.

Turning Point provides the Department with six-monthly data reports and annual data analysis reports. It is expected that the annual reports will be made public. Law enforcement agencies may access the six-monthly data on request.

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HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Crystal Methamphetamine

24 March 2017

Question no: 5

Topic: Waste water analysis

Type of Question: Written

Chair: Mr Kelly

Question:

On 26 March 2017, the ACIC released the first report on the *National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program*.

- i. Would you like to comment on the results in this report?
- ii. How will the results from this program inform better health responses to illicit drug use?
- iii. Will further resources be provided to regions that show above average methamphetamine use? If so, what?

Answer:

The report is a useful addition to the range of alcohol and other drug data available in Australia.

The results from this program, together with data and information from other sources, will assist the Department of Health in developing local responses to alcohol and other drug issues in collaboration with Primary Health Networks (PHNs), states and territories and the alcohol and other drug sector.

The results for methamphetamine, together with other information, will assist in determining the best overall service mix in regions and those that that will best benefit from methamphetamine specific resources, such as the Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test – Brief Intervention methamphetamine screening tool, and interventions developed through the new Clinical Centre of Excellence.