



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem**

**28 September 2022**

On 26 September 2022, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement resolved to inquire into and report on the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem.

Australia is often described as having an insatiable appetite for illicit drugs.<sup>1</sup> The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's latest National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program report found that Australia had the highest methylamphetamine consumption per capita compared to 24 other countries, ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 26 countries for cocaine consumption and 5<sup>th</sup> out of 27 countries for MDMA consumption.<sup>2</sup>

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Senator Wendy Askew  
Mr Sam Lim MP  
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Australia's illicit drug market is "highly lucrative, with a growing demand for a wide variety of substances", and serious and organised crime groups have greatly profited from the importation, manufacture, trafficking, and sale of drugs that cause harm to individuals, families, and communities.<sup>3</sup>

In examining the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem, the committee will closely explore the following areas:

- trends and changes in Australia's illicit drug markets;
- emerging illicit drug risks;
- law enforcement's ability to detect and respond to the trafficking of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals;
- the effectiveness of law enforcement's involvement in supply, demand, and harm reduction efforts; and
- the strengths and weaknesses of decriminalisation and its impact on illicit drug markets based on the evidence from other jurisdictions.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Australian Federal Police, '[AFP appeals for information about illicit drug seizure](#)', *Media Release*, 5 April 2022; and Fergus Hunter, '[Organised crime is overpowering authorities in drug wars, says veteran investigator](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), '[Australia dominates in global consumption of methylamphetamine](#)', *Media Release*, 30 June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> ACIC, '[Australia dominates in global consumption of methylamphetamine](#)', *Media Release*, 30 June 2022; and ACIC, '[A record 38.5 tonnes of illicit drugs seized in Australia in 2019-20](#)', *Media Release*, 20 October 2021.

The committee is calling for written submissions, and requests they are received by **Friday, 13 January 2023**.

## **Further information**

The inquiry's full terms of reference are attached to this media release and can be found on the committee's webpage:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Law\\_Enforcement/IllicitDrugs/Terms\\_of\\_Reference](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Law_Enforcement/IllicitDrugs/Terms_of_Reference)

If you would like to make a submission, you may find it helpful to read the guide to making a submission available on the Senate website: [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Making\\_a\\_submission](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Making_a_submission)

Any questions regarding the inquiry or providing a submission can be directed to the committee secretariat on 02 6277 3419 or [le.committee@aph.gov.au](mailto:le.committee@aph.gov.au).

# PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

## **Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem**

### **Terms of Reference**

Pursuant to subsection 7(1) of the *Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Act 2010*, the committee will inquire into and report on the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem, with particular reference to:

- a) trends and changes relating to illicit drug markets in Australia, including the supply, trafficking, production, distribution and use of illicit drugs;
- b) emerging trends and risks, such as new psychoactive substances, adulterated drugs and other new sources of threat;
- c) law enforcement's ability to detect and respond to the trafficking of precursor chemicals and illicit drugs, including the adequacy of screening techniques and the impact of seizures on illicit drug availability and use;
- d) the involvement of law enforcement in harm reduction strategies and in efforts to reduce supply and demand, including the effectiveness of its involvement;
- e) the strengths and weaknesses of decriminalisation, including its impact on illicit drug markets and the experiences of other jurisdictions; and
- f) other related matters.