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NDARC
National Drug &
Alcohol Research Centre

25th November, 2016

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank-you for the opportunity to respond to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement – Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine.

You have received our previous submission (submission No. 16, dated 10th June 2015). We will not reiterate points made previously.

Since June 2015, there has been a number of federal and state/territory initiatives (notably the National Ice Taskforce report, the government's response, and the Ice Strategy).

Despite this responsiveness, we identify three key areas that require sustained attention:

1. Treatment services for people experiencing problems with methamphetamine. The key challenge here is the fragmented approach to service planning and purchasing and the challenges associated with federalism where the two levels of government (federal versus state/territory) do not dovetail together. The states/territories fund the majority of alcohol and other drug treatment, including methamphetamine and are seen as the central planning unit for their jurisdiction. The nature of contracting for treatment services leaves providers very vulnerable.
2. Data needs – we continue to have poor information about the extent of methamphetamine use and harms. The National Drug Strategy Household Survey is an essential part of our understanding of drug use in Australia, but occurs only every three years, and does not tap into the more marginalised populations with higher likelihood of illicit drug use. Smarter, more responsive data systems are needed. The Drug Trends program at NDARC (IDRS and EDRS) collect invaluable information annually from a sentinel group of people who use drugs, and should be continued
3. Rural and remote: we are still very much in the dark about the nature of methamphetamine use amongst rural and regional populations. We also have poor information about the supply chains and market routes which would inform strategic policing. We appreciate the significant challenges in conducting research on sensitive topics such as this within small communities. However, to develop effective responses we require better knowledge as a first step.

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I would be pleased to expand on any of these points, should the Committee require.

Yours sincerely

Alison Ritter, Professor

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Deputy Director, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

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