

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Group: 3

Program: Other Agency

Question: BE14/002

Senator Xenophon asked the following question at the hearing on 26-29 May 2014:

Senator XENOPHON: The next issue is that in Scandinavia, particularly Sweden, they have mandatory drug rehabilitation and their heroin and methamphetamine use is a fraction of ours. Is that something the ACC has looked at—a different approach to rehabilitation so that you actually reduce the demand for these drugs?

Mr Dawson: I do not have any specifics in regard to the Scandinavian research, but we are working collaboratively with many academic and international law enforcement bodies. I am prepared to take it on notice to see if we have anything specifically in relation to the matter you refer to.

Senator XENOPHON: The issue I want to raise with you is this: if you tackle rehabilitation, not just law enforcement, that can have a very powerful effect in reducing the number of people who are affected by an ice addiction. It seems that in Sweden the figures—at least the ones that I have seen—are about one-sixth or one-tenth of what they are here. Can we learn from what the Scandinavians are doing with their policies on rehabilitation?

Mr Dawson: I would agree with that statement. The illicit drug strategies that form part of the government policy framework directly talk to harm reduction. In that sense, the Illicit drug data report that is a basis document is shared with harm reduction providers, including health departments et cetera.

Senator XENOPHON: Finally, there has been a criticism in my home state of South Australia that the way the drug courts have worked has not been very effective. They are open to being circumvented with abuse of urine testing and the like. They are not being followed up. On notice, can you tell us whether the ACC has looked at issues of the efficacy of current drug courts and their ability, in the longitudinal sense, to be effective?

Mr Dawson: I am presently unaware of whether the ACC have done a study of the use of the drug courts in the jurisdictions. But, again, I can take that on notice. Senator XENOPHON: Thank you.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

Primary responsibility for drug rehabilitation and demand reduction measures is taken by the Department of Health. The ACC's work falls largely into the categories of supply and harm reduction and hence we cannot comment with authority on the totality of the demand reduction measures that are being applied to the illicit drug problem, nor on the basis of particular policies.

Work is also done by state and territory agencies and by the private sector.

The ACC has not undertaken any work on the effectiveness of drug courts and cannot comment on this issue.