

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

**Question No. 227**

**Senator Stott Despoja asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:**

- a) On p. 52 of the AFP Annual Report it is stated that “Australia has maintained a higher MDMA [or ecstasy] seizure rate than North America, the European Union and the world in the years available for comparison.” How can this be judged a success for the AFP when the percentage of the Australian population that has used ecstasy recently has more than trebled since 1995?<sup>1</sup>
- b) The AFP Annual Report also states at p. 52 that “In terms of cocaine seizures Australia has lagged behind North America, the European Union and the world in most years.” Is it true to say that the reason cocaine seizures are low is because cocaine has never been widely used or available in Australia (except in NSW at the height of the heroin drought)?

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

- a) The statement is relative to the performance of other nations and not relative to the drug market within Australia.
- b) The extent of the cocaine market cannot be accurately estimated. Consumption has traditionally centred on Sydney but there are indications of cocaine use increasing in other metropolitan centres.

The 2005 Illicit Drug Reporting System reported cocaine is used across a wide cross-section of the Australian population.

According to the Australian Crime Commission’s 2003/04 Illicit Drug Data Report the trend over recent years has been toward small importations (with the notable exception of 100kg seized on a beach in Albany, WA in August 2004). This trend may explain that while the number of cocaine seizures is at its highest levels since the early 1990s, the total weight of seizures is at its lowest level since 1998-99.

---

<sup>1</sup> Trends in “recent use”- within the past 12 months – are given in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First results* (Drug statistics series no. 13) (Canberra, April 2005) at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/phe/ndshs04/ndshs04.pdf>