

Beat: Health

WA Police Tackles Meth Epidemic

State Member for Perth holds forum

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USPA NEWS - The emergence of meth in the community is putting enormous pressure on families, communities and our police and hospital emergency departments. Methamphetamine is unlike any drug we have seen before in WA. It is linked to the vast majority of crime and induces an unprecedented level of violence.

Last month Eleni Evangel MLA, Member for Perth, held one of a series of WA Meth Strategy Forums taking place across our State. The forum was attended by the Hon Andrea Mitchell MLA, Minister for Mental Health, and the Hon Liza Harvey MLA, Minister for Police, who spoke about the Government's work in tackling this insidious drug and its impact on the local community. The Liberal-National Government will do all that it can to eradicate it from our streets.

"We are fighting meth on three fronts", said Ms Evangel MLA. "Education to stop people from ever using this dangerous drug; support and treatment services to help people who are impacted by meth; and crushing the supply of meth into Western Australia."

The Western Australian Meth Strategy.

The use of crystal methamphetamine (also known as meth and Ice) is a significant problem for WA law enforcement and health professionals as well as families and individuals trying to cope with the frightening impact of the drug.

The negative effects experienced by users, such as psychosis and violence, have a knock-on effect in the wider community where meth is increasingly being linked to domestic violence, sexual assaults and other crime.

The sharp shift in the proportion of meth users, the increased harm to individuals, the increasing cost to Government services and growing concern from the community has reinforced the need for the Government's strong and coordinated response to the scourge of meth.

The WA Meth Strategy outlines the State Government's two-pronged approach "" targeting the supply chain by strengthening law enforcement measures to reduce production and distribution of meth, and reducing demand for the drug through targeted early intervention programs and individual and community support

Disrupting Supply

WA Police have experienced a 40.8 per cent increase in amphetamine-type stimulant arrests between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Research has indicated that meth users are 1.6 times more likely to commit robbery, 1.8 times more likely to commit burglary, 2.1 times more likely to

arm themselves with weapons and 1.5 times more likely to commit property offences than non-users. Drug Use Monitoring Australia (DUMA) statistics sourced in relation to the offenders lodged at the Perth Watch House also indicate that the percentage of offenders who had “recently used meth”, has tripled from 15 per cent in 2009, to 53 per cent in the third quarter of 2015. This is the highest percentage since the data was first collected in 1999.

The amount of meth seized in WA has also significantly increased from 122.7kg seized in 2013-14 to 276.2kg seized in 2014-15.

From July 2015 to December 2015, WA Police seized approximately 418kg of meth. This figure includes a seizure of 321kg in September 2015.

In the 2014 calendar year, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) seized 193 kg of meth destined for the Western Australian market, with 45kg of these seizures coming from postal and parcel deliveries, 15.2kg from international air courier (e.g. cargo, baggage and internal-human), 16.5kg concealed in freight and 115.7kg seized in other searches.

The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) has determined that a high proportion of the meth seized in Australia originated from overseas. It has become much more profitable for illicit drug manufacturers to purchase meth from countries such as Taiwan and China, than to manufacture it in Australia.

In its 2013-14 Annual Report, the ACC established that one kilogram of meth can be purchased in China for \$6,522, and sold in Australia for \$590,000.

This has resulted in a decrease in the number of clandestine drug laboratories producing meth in Western Australia.

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WA Police “Meth Enforcement Action Plan

In July 2015 the Liberal National Government announced the Meth Enforcement Action Plan. The Plan has been developed by WA Police to enhance their activities to target the supply of meth in the community.

It includes the establishment of:

1.

Meth Transport Teams

The meth transport teams deploy to key transport hubs to conduct searches of vehicles, trucks, trains and aircraft entering WA, seizing meth and arresting those responsible.

2.

Agency cooperation and collaboration

Greater cooperation and collaboration between WA Police Organised Crime Division and federal law enforcement partners, operating as the Joint

Organised Crime Task Force.

Partners include:

“¢

Australian Federal Police;

“¢

Australian Customs and Border Protection;

“¢

Australian Crime Commission; and

“¢ AUSTRAC.

Since April 2015, officers have been co-located at the AFP Aviation Operations Building at Perth Airport, are operating as the Joint Organised Crime Taskforce. The Taskforce allows key agencies to share intelligence on drug importations, combine specialist capabilities and detect and disrupt meth importation into WA and arrest those responsible.

3.

Dedicated Meth Teams

Dedicated Meth Teams have been established within the Organised Crime Squad to target meth dealers in metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

4.

Seize Cash Profits from Meth Sales

Dedicated teams involving collaboration with the Australian Crime Commission have been established. The teams investigate the transfer of money derived from meth, nationally and internationally, seizing funds and arresting those responsible.

The WA Police Proceeds of Crime Squad are also focused on seizing money derived from local meth based dealers.

5.

Meth Desk

A Meth Desk has been established within WA Police which provides intelligence and investigative support for Meth Teams.

6.

Clan Labs

In 2011 when clan labs were an escalating problem, the Liberal National Government introduced new laws for adults who manufacture, cultivate or prepare illicit drugs that cause harm to a child, which meant they faced a mandatory minimum jail term of 12 months. In 2011, 177 clan labs were detected by WA Police, with 35 children present at some sites.

WA Police deconstructed 84 clan labs in 2014.

During the financial year to date 35 clan labs have been deconstructed by WA Police, 27 of which were capable of producing meth.

WA Police intelligence indicates that clan labs in WA are not currently driving the meth trade and there is no evidence that they are capable of producing significant quantities.

However, the Organised Crime Squad (OCS) will maintain resources to locate and dismantle clan labs

which also pose a broad risk to the community.

7.

Road Side Drug Testing

Studies have shown that drugs that are capable of impairing driver skills have been found in significant numbers of drivers who have been injured or killed on our roads. Statistics indicate that meth and other drugs are a factor in up to 20 per cent of serious and fatal crashes.

WA Police have increased road side drug testing since 2012 from approximately 9,000 tests to almost 30,000 tests in the 2015-16 financial year. In 2015-16 \$5.6 million was allocated to WA Police from the Road Trauma Trust Account for additional breath and drug testing and more than \$5 million will be allocated again in 2016-17.

This is a reflection of the commitment to catch meth users who are risking their lives and those of other road users by driving under the influence of illicit drugs.

For more information download the PDF available through the Ministers Link.

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