

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Supply and Use of Methamphetamines, Particularly 'ICE' in Victoria.

Executive Officer
Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee
Parliament House
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Executive Officer,

On behalf of the Yarra Drug and Health Forum (YDHF) I would like to make the following submission to the Inquiry into the Supply and Use of Amphetamines, particularly 'ice'.

Firstly, the following points regarding the use and supply of 'ice' provided to YDHF should be made:

- the use of 'ice' appears to be increasing, with anecdotal information indicating that use is now more frequent amongst those clients attending primary health care facilities including needle and syringe programs

- violent incidents have been reported by alcohol and drug workers, both between clients and toward workers

- 'ice' is following a similar pattern to other types of illicit drug use; e.g. clients will use whichever drug is cheapest and more available, this includes prescribed and over the counter drugs in addition to heroin

- the Aboriginal community is reporting frequent use amongst young people raising concerns about levels of aggression

While these points are only a brief summary of the issues that are raised at YDHJF meetings and other events, we are fully aware that the use of 'ice' has broader implications for the community and broader policy issues.

We would therefore like to make the following comments about these issues and provide advice for actions/responses to these and other matters that may be raised in this inquiry:

- significant resource investment is required to conduct research into the issue of 'ice' in the community with specific funding put toward research on the prevalence and impact of this substance, effective prevention strategies and a broad range of treatment options

- innovative approaches should be adopted such as decriminalising of drug use and the adopting health-based responses such as those now being used in Portugal and Switzerland. The current 'war on drugs' approach has failed and merely throwing more money at police and the criminal justice system to 'solve' this issue will not work.

- YDHF submits that the police role in this issue should be to solely look at supply issues and divert people using this and other substances through to assessment and treatment. Police Diversion programs need to be broadened and enhanced and current restrictions on the number of Diversions granted by police be removed.

-the committee should avoid recommending 'TAC' style advertising to warn about the 'dangers' of 'ice'. These mass-media strategies are mostly ineffective and in many cases counter-productive.

-any approach that seeks to address the issue of the prevention of the use of 'ice', particularly amongst young people, should address the factors that put some young people 'most at risk'. Resources should be put toward addressing disadvantage, parenting skills, risk and protective/resilience factors, retention and success at school – resources should also be increased for youth-based treatment agencies and school welfare

I am happy to discuss these comments further.

Regards,

Greg Denham
YDHF