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The National Voice of Policing

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Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia

### **Inquiry into Crystal Methamphetamine (ice)**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Inquiry into Crystal Methamphetamine (ice). The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) represents the professional and industrial interests of the nation's 59,000 police officers.

Research, supported by anecdotal evidence from our members, indicates that methamphetamine users are on the rise nationally and police are coming into contact with users on an increasingly frequent basis. Ice does not discriminate and it is not associated with any socio economic demographic. The PFA believes that the effectiveness in fighting any illegal drug use will be determined by the collaborative efforts of all levels of Government and all relevant agencies working toward the same set of key outcomes.

Many of the issues pertaining to the manufacture of the drug ice; including the establishment of laboratories, police powers to enter certain premises, prosecuting offenders and enforcing stiffer sentences, primarily fall within the state domain, whilst clearly numerous issues around aspects of the source material and particularly its importation fall under the responsibility of the Federal Government.

Of particular concern to the PFA are the occupational health & safety issues associated with our members dealing with this drug. This relates specifically to members risk of exposure to harmful chemicals within ice manufacturing/laboratory settings and extends to their direct contact on the street with the users themselves and managing their erratic and violent behavior.

As we have previously stated, this issue transcends all levels of Government. Whilst this is a Federal Government Committee, we believe you have an opportunity to bring together and assist in coordinating, a national response to the problem.

Some issues raised by our members that the Federal Government could specifically target include –

- Focusing on reducing the importation of source materials including glassware and the like, particularly those items that are sold on the black market
- The improvement and funding of increased border detection methods, especially for weak points such as sea freight. One example raised by members is the alleged flow of ice and precursors from PNG (where there are limited border controls and legislation) through Torres Strait into North Queensland (bound for southern markets). This is also having a significant adverse effect on indigenous communities in far North Queensland.
- Increasing the availability of treatment options for users and increasing community engagement/ownership specifically for this issue. Reaching out to diverse groups within the community including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, groups focused on mental health and indigenous and migrant communities.
- Providing Federal government funding for specialised and standardised police equipment and training to protect our officers from exposure to dangerous chemicals and other hazards associated with the manufacture of ice. In November 2013, the Queensland Police Service hosted the National Drug Commander's Forum in Cairns. The Forum was attended by senior officers from all States and Territories and New Zealand. It was raised during this Forum that the lack of national consistency regarding clandestine drug laboratory training, assessment and processing raised significant health and safety issues.

The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) is scoping the development of national Guidelines/Standards in relation to the training, assessment and processing of clandestine drug laboratories. Police involvement in the detection and dismantling of clandestine drug laboratories has potentially long term and serious occupational health and safety implications.

**It is the PFA's view that the Federal Government should fund the development of the proposed national Guidelines/Standards in respect to dealing with clandestine drug laboratories and the training of state, territory and federal police in this important function.**

- Reviewing legislation pertaining to search powers under the Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914 which in its current form is deemed by members to be too restrictive. A review of the legislation in respect to searches to persons in

police custody, strip searches as well as the potential to search persons not under arrest would be a welcome recommendation of this committee.

- The issue of intelligence sharing and coordination across all law enforcement agencies at a commonwealth, state and territory level is also essential in combating the use of ice and other drugs.

Other areas that our members have raised in which the Federal government might seek to act in partnership with the states includes –

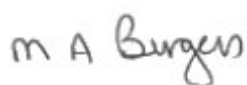
- **Rehabilitation** - Feedback from members is that simply fining or even jailing “users”, will not necessarily have the desired effect. Members working in some of the high ice user areas suggest that compulsory rehabilitation is the best way forward. However, dealers and those responsible for the manufacture (particularly through sophisticated drug labs) and/or importation of materials or precursor drugs, should receive the full force of the law and receive no leniency
- **Education** - General feedback from our members is that this insidious drug requires a complex, nationally coordinated education program. Current policy for drug education in schools needs to be updated. If children are exposed to messages as to the harms of drug use earlier they are more likely to be resilient to peer pressure to use drugs. School and vocational training any education programmes need to cover multiple reasons on avoiding drugs as “drugs are bad” does not work. Programmes need to incorporate a breadth of angles for instance physical harm, psychological harm, economic harm, social harm, addiction happening after one use, aging effects of drugs etc.

National campaigns should target youth and should particularly focus on social media. Any campaign needs to be a joint effort in promoting health/crime/social messages within the community emphasising the harms of ice use. Ice does not discriminate and campaigns should be hard hitting making it clear there is no safe level of consumption. One such campaign from the United States

['Not Even Once'](#) is attached for the information of the Committee.

The PFA is happy to work with the Committee in any way that might best assist your deliberations and recommendations.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burgess APM  
**Chief Executive Officer**