



Steve DICKSON MP

Member for Buderim



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Mr Craig Kelly MP - Chair
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Kelly,

INQUIRY INTO CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE (ICE)

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 June 2015, through which you invited submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's inquiry into crystal methamphetamine (ice).

The use of crystal methamphetamines has emerged as a significant issue in our community, linked to increased levels of violence, related serious criminal activity and deterioration in mental health.

I understand from your correspondence that the committee will examine the criminal activities, practices and methods involved in the importation, manufacture, distribution and use of methamphetamine and its chemical precursors, including crystal methamphetamine (ice) and its impact on Australian society.

I am informed that illegal drug use is most commonly associated with crimes committed to finance the user's drug habit. However, it appears that the use of 'ice' is linked to an increase in violent crime against people and property because of the psychopharmacological effects of these drugs and their highly addictive nature. I am particularly concerned about the implications for our emergency responders, including the police service in dealing with issues relating to public safety and family violence.

I am of the view that there needs to be a coordinated government response to ice drug use, across law enforcement, health, justice and education departments in Australia. In this instance, I would like to make a particular contribution with reference to point (g) of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry, namely '*the involvement of organised crime including international organised crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs in methamphetamine related criminal activities*'.

I note that in late 2013 the former LNP Government in Queensland introduced what many have described as the strongest laws in Australia dealing with criminal gangs. These legislative changes strengthened the law enforcement response to 'ice'. Recently, a Queensland Court convicted the first person under the *Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Act 2013* (VLAD laws). The person convicted under legislation was a drug trafficker involved in a multimillion-dollar cannabis syndicate.

I am very concerned that the current Labor Government in Queensland has stated its intention to overturn these laws in Queensland, even when their counterparts in South Australia are looking to these laws as an example. If Queensland would weaken its anti-association or anti-consorting type laws when other States are looking to toughen up their laws, Queensland could become a softer landing place for organised crime to gather.

I urge the Australian Government to work with all Australian States and Territories to consider implementing Queensland's current tough VLAD laws - which target the illegal activities of criminal gangs, including criminal bikie gangs - and work together in doing so, as crime does not stop at State borders. Only if all Australian jurisdictions work together do we stand a chance to combat these criminal gangs - who are at the centre of so much criminal activity and are known to be involved in the production and distribution of methamphetamines.

I would also like to bring to the Committee's attention that senior police backed the effectiveness of the VLAD laws with Queensland Police Union president Ian Leavers and anti-bikie taskforce leader Superintendent Jim Keogh warning that any attempt to wind back the laws could plunge Queensland back into chaos and lawlessness. (*'Hands off bikie laws, police warn politicians ahead of state election'*, Courier Mail, 5 January 2015). It is very important that the legislation we have in place at all levels of government allows our law enforcement officers to effectively respond to this impending, and some would say unfolding, crisis.

Effective legislation combined with better resourcing and targeted enforcement activity saw falling crime rates and a safer Queensland in recent years.

I would also like to make mention of the Australian Government's hard hitting campaign on the scourge of 'ice' in our communities, as we need to get the message out to particularly young people and parents with that this drug is extremely addictive and destroys lives, families and communities. The confronting campaign depicts the effects this devastating drug has not only on users and their families but also on our emergency responders and importantly also acknowledges the devastating impact on many rural communities.

I thank the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement for initiating an inquiry into crystal methamphetamine (ice) and its insidious impact on Australian society, and I look forward to receiving a copy of your findings.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Steve Dickson MP
Member for Buderim