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9 December 2016

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

Email: le.committee@aph.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine (ice)

To the Committee Secretary,

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to update our submission to the reopened inquiry into crystal methamphetamine.

Since making our initial submission in 2015, the Government has taken some positive steps in responding to methamphetamine use in Australia. The National Ice Taskforce recognised the pressure ice use was putting on individuals, families, communities and services and the need for treatment, education and training as well as law enforcement responses. The National Ice Action Strategy also recognises the challenges of treating dependent ice use and the need for investment in treatment and workforce.

We welcome the Government's commitment of \$298.2 million over four years to reduce the impacts of ice use in response to the Taskforce report. It is pleasing that a significant proportion of this funding has been allocated to further drug and alcohol treatment services as well as prevention and education activities. However, we are yet to see this roll out on the ground and look forward to seeing more treatment services commissioned by Primary Health Networks in operation in the near future.

Mission Australia has also received \$2 million in funding for a detoxification centre at our award-winning Triple Care Farm rehabilitation and treatment program. This has been supplemented by funds raised by the Sir David Martin Foundation and will open in 2017. This facility will provide a youth-appropriate 28 day detoxification program with the first 10 days focussed on physical withdrawal and the remaining time devoted to psychosocial issues. This valuable addition to Triple Care Farm will provide much-needed additional support to young people in the early stages of their use and addiction.

While the impacts of ice use and issues arising have not changed since our initial submission, the prevalence of ice use has continued to grow across our services. For example:

- At Triple Care Farm, methamphetamine continues to be the primary drug of concern for young people accessing the program. This year 77 per cent of Triple Care Farm's clients identified methamphetamine as a part of their overall drug use.
- At Junaa Buwa!, our residential rehabilitation centre for teenagers who have entered, or are at risk of entering, the juvenile justice system in Coffs Harbour, 69 per cent of our young clients aged 13 to 18 identified crystal methamphetamine as their primary drug of concern in the first quarter of the 2017 financial year.
- At our drug and alcohol youth outreach counselling service for clients aged 12 to 24 in Metropolitan South Australia, methamphetamine was the second most commonly used substance of clients referred during 2015-16, with 31 per cent of referred clients reporting that their primary drug of concern was methamphetamine.
- At our Drug and Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS) in Western Australia, methamphetamine has been rising as the primary drug of concern for clients over the last twelve months, from 16 per cent (January to June 2015) to 27 per cent (January to June 2016).

We continue to hear from our rehabilitation services that they are struggling to cope where detoxification has not been available or has not been long enough. In fact some people discharged after a five day detox period have such severe symptoms and anger that communication is impossible. Severe withdrawal from ice can last two weeks and a four week program for young people such as that which will be offered through Triple Care Farm is essential. Access to youth-appropriate detoxification also allows for earlier intervention before ice use becomes more entrenched.

Community treatment and after care are also crucial for clients to maintain their health after rehabilitation. Without staged care, young people not only face a high risk of re-commencing their ice use but also a high risk of overdose after a period of abstinence. The temptation of returning to a community with high rates of drug use, previous peer groups or a family where other family members are using can be overwhelming for young people exiting rehabilitation, and the provision of accommodation and after care support is vital.

In terms of contact with police and justice, diversionary programs such as Youth on Track and targeted rehabilitation programs such as Mission Australia's MAC River and Junaa Buwa! are important parts of the solution. Stigma also needs to be addressed to promote help seeking.

Our recommendations for addressing ice use remain as set out in our 2015 submission: for investment in outreach, early intervention, youth detoxification centres, family support services, workforce training, intensive treatment, supported housing and coordinated, holistic and continuous care.

Please find attached a copy of our 2015 submission and do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions. We also welcome the Committee to visit our alcohol and drug treatment



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programs and other community service programs impacted by ice use and see the issues and effective responses for themselves.

Yours sincerely

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