



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Institute of Health and Welfare**

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Mr Jonathan Curtis  
Secretary  
Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION

REC'D: 20 Feb 2006

FROM: AIHW

AUTHORISED FOR PUBLICATION:

SECRETARY:

Dear Mr Curtis

**Inquiry into amphetamines and other synthetic drugs**

I refer to your letter dated 8 December 2005, and thank you for your invitation to make a submission to this Inquiry.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has conducted the last three National Drug Strategy Household Surveys on behalf of the Australian Government, covering the reference years 1998, 2001 and 2004. These surveys are the authoritative source of information on the prevalence of drug use behaviours among the general Australian community.

In each of these three surveys we have asked questions about the use of amphetamines, and the use of ecstasy and related drugs. For the 2004 survey the term 'amphetamines' was changed to 'methamphetamines' on the advice of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre that virtually all amphetamines use in Australia was now in the form of methamphetamines. Also for 2004 the concept of 'ecstasy/designer drugs' was separated out into ecstasy, ketamine, and GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), with no other reference to 'designer drugs' in the 2004 survey.

The committee should note that based on laboratory analysis of seized tablets of ecstasy and related drugs, it is thought that a fair proportion of users of these drugs cannot be fully aware of the particular type of drug they are consuming. The common ecstasy-related drugs in Australia are MDMA (ecstasy) and its analogs MDA ('love drug'), MDEA ('Eve'), PMA ('death drug') and 4-MTA ('flatliner').

The Committee should also note that researchers and other workers in the alcohol and other drugs field often refer to the group 'amphetamine-type stimulants/substances' (ATSs), which comprises amphetamines and related substances, cocaine, and ecstasy and related substances.

The AIHW is pleased to be able to contribute to part (a) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, by reporting on the trends in consumption of amphetamines and other synthetic drugs in Australia. A summary of the recent trends in consumption is at Attachment A, and more details can be found in the range of AIHW reports from the survey, and related publications. All these reports are available on the AIHW

website (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/criteria//subject/3040>), or could be provided in printed form if you prefer.

Another view on the consumption of amphetamines and related drugs comes through the information collected from alcohol and other drugs treatment services. The AIHW also manages the national data collection of treatment episodes completed at publicly-funded services, with the most recent report from this collection covering the 2003-04 financial year period. Copies of these reports are also available from the web page detailed above or in printed form:

I trust that this information will be useful for your Inquiry. Please contact myself, or Mr Mark Cooper-Stanbury on 02 6244 1251, if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Allbon', written in a cursive style.

Penny Allbon  
Director

17 February 2006

## Attachment A

### Summary of recent use<sup>(a)</sup> of amphetamines and related substances in Australia

Substance	1993	1995	1998	2001	2004
			(per cent)		
Meth/amphetamines	2.0	2.1	3.7	3.4	3.2
Cocaine	0.5	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.0 #
Ecstasy <sup>(b)</sup>	1.2	0.9	2.4	2.9	3.4 #
Ketamine	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.3
GHB	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.1

(a) Used in the last 12 months.

(b) Included 'Designer drugs' prior to 2004.

# 2004 result significantly different from 2001 result.

Note: Prevalence for persons aged 14 years and over.

Source: Extracted from 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First results (AIHW cat. no. PHE 57).