

MEDIA RELEASE

Tasmania can lead the way with best-practice drug reform

Monday, 2 March 2020

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania (ATDC) has welcomed the report and recommendations from the New South Wales Government's Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' (crystal methamphetamine).

Released to the public last week, the inquiry presented their findings to the NSW Government in January. The inquiry examined the nature, prevalence and impact of crystal methamphetamine and other illicit amphetamine substances in NSW, the adequacy of existing measures and options to strengthen their response to these drugs.

ATDC chief executive Alison Lai agrees with Commissioner Howard that a paradigm shift is needed to truly deal with the harm caused by crystal methamphetamine and other illicit drugs, and echoes his calls for courageous leadership from the NSW Government.

"This inquiry was undertaken over 14 months with the Commissioner provided with wide-ranging evidence-gathering powers where they heard from people and families with lived experience, treatment and rehabilitation services, health workers, first responders, government, law enforcement, communities and other stakeholders," Ms Lai said.

"It is the second comprehensive inquiry into drug policies in NSW following the NSW Coroner's extensive investigation last year of the deaths of young people at NSW music festivals.

"It is of no surprise to us that following another thorough review of the evidence that this Inquiry includes recommendations for clinically supervised substance testing [pill testing], and the decriminalisation of personal use and possession of prohibited drugs."

There were 109 recommendations outlined in the Inquiry report, and the ATDC is particularly pleased to see recommendations for:

- Decriminalisation of personal use and possession of prohibited drugs (Recommendation 11)
- Supervised drug consumption services be provided based on local need (Recommendation 51 & 52)
- A clinically supervised substance testing, education and information service at fixed-site locations along with a trial of the outreach capacity of the service at a music festival (Recommendation 53)
- Police to cease the use of sniffer dogs at music festivals in favour of other detection methods (Recommendation 80)

"We are disappointed to see the NSW Government has already reported that they will continue to reject the majority of the key harm reduction recommendations outlined in the report, including pill testing," Ms Lai said.



No Harm, No Discrimination

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"This is despite this being the second expert authority in matter of months to recommend that they be trialled.

"The NSW Government went into this process announcing that they wanted every option on the table to respond to the harms being caused by these substances, but when the recommendations are so swiftly rejected, it can only be perceived that they are putting politics ahead of community wellbeing.

"This can't continue, because to do so is accepting that governments will continue to deter implementing best practice drug programs and services for risk that they're seen to be 'politically unpalatable', which only harms the communities they seek to protect."

Despite the NSW Government's response, Ms Lai believes this presents an opportunity for Tasmania.

"While the NSW Government are reluctant to show courageous leadership in this space, Tasmania has a unique opportunity to step up and be a national leader in the delivery of best-practice drug education and treatment programs," she said.

"Last year the Tasmanian Government committed to reviewing the Australian National University's independent assessment of the second trial of pill testing in the ACT, and we anticipate that we'll be sitting down with them in a matter of weeks to discuss their assessment of that report.

"We look forward to that discussion because the harms from crystal methamphetamine and other amphetamine substances, including ecstasy, are not confined to NSW.

"We can't allow politics to override the evidence and Tasmania must step forward and adopt best-practice strategies to reduce the harms of illicit substances in our community."

Media Contact: Alison Lai, CEO – 0450 517 017

Further information:

[Special Commission of Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type stimulants - Report Overview for the media of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'](#)

Who are the ATDC?

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania is the peak body representing and supporting community organisations, and the people they assist, to reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harm for all Tasmanians.

Our vision is a Tasmania without alcohol, tobacco or other drug related harm or discrimination.



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LANGUAGE MATTERS – Language is powerful, especially when discussing alcohol and other drugs and the people who use them. Stigmatising language reinforces negative stereotypes. “Person-centred” language focuses on the person, not their substance use.

When reporting on people who use alcohol and other drugs....	
Try this ↴	Not this ↴
Substance use, non-prescribed use	Abuse, misuse, problem use, non-compliant use
Person who uses drugs	Drug user, drug abuser
Person with a dependence on....	Addict, junkie, druggie, alcoholic
Person experiencing drug dependence	Suffering from addiction, has a drug habit
Person who has stopped using drugs	Clean, sober, drug-free
Person with lived experience of drug dependence	Ex-addict, former addict, used to be a...
Please see the <i>Language matters</i> resource at: www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/	



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