

First expert meeting of the National 'Ice' Taskforce: We know what to do: give communities help and the facts

The ACT's peak drug body, the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA), met the National 'Ice' Taskforce at their first expert meeting in Brisbane.

"We discussed the increasing harms being experienced by some individuals, families and communities due to crystal methamphetamine, alcohol and other drugs including the disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," said Ms Carrie Fowlie, Executive Officer, ATODA.

"We urged the National 'Ice' Taskforce to stick to the facts, recommend evidence based strategies and resist being alarmist."

"Given fear has been driving the rhetoric, the public could be forgiven for thinking that we aren't responding and don't know what to do. That's not true. Australia has quality, evidence-informed and cost-effective drug treatment, harm reduction and support services. The problem is we just don't have enough of them in enough places."

"We questioned the value and lack of research to support a mass media campaign based on fear. Trying to 'scare people straight' has never worked, fear just breeds more fear. However there is value in giving Australians the facts about drugs and encouraging them to ask for help."

"One of the best ways we can prevent harmful drug use is by having supportive and well-informed families and communities. One of the worst things we can do is to allow young people and families to think methamphetamine use is commonplace when it is not. 98% of Australians don't use methamphetamine."

"We advised the Taskforce to focus resources and support towards the 2% of Australians and their families and communities who are at most risk of methamphetamine-related harms."

"We recommended that any new investment should build upon, and lever off of, current investments in drug treatment, harm reduction and support services."

"We stated the importance of real-time data, research, evaluation and capacity building within current and new initiatives."

"We suggested a change to how the Australian drug budget is spent. Currently 66% is spent on law enforcement whereas treatment receives 21.3% and harm reduction receives 2.1%."

"We shared our vision of healthy, strong, supported and informed individuals, families and communities."

"We thanked the Taskforce for choosing to have their first expert meeting with the state and territory alcohol and other drug peak bodies and we offered ongoing support."

"The Taskforce acknowledged the significant expertise and contributions of the alcohol and other drug sector."

For comment or further information please contact:
Carrie Fowlie, Executive Officer, ATODA, on 0406 585 020