

Date: April 30<sup>th</sup> 2014



## Issue: 'ICE PANDEMIC'

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-29/illicit-drug-data-report-meth-ice-steroid-use-on-the-rise/5417380>

[*"Permissibility, availability and accessibility - all increase consumption."* Dalgarno Institute.]

National Director of Dalgarno Institute, Shane Varcoe has expressed great concern about the latest report on the rise in methamphetamine trafficking and use in Australia and says that "There are a number of reasons for this increase, but much of the blame must lie with bad drug policy platform, both assumptions and ideologies."

The use of P.I.E.D's (Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs) has been on a steady rise in recent years with cultural market drivers behind that statistic, it's no surprise to see such usage on the rise. For instance, the easy and cost free availability of needles and syringes has meant 'safer', free use is a phone call or vending machine away. With the ease of manufacture and the promotion of Crystal Meth as a sex/party drug among certain sub-cultural groups has contributed to the growing use.

However, according to Dalgarno's research, it is always the underlying premises and foundational ideologies that drive demand. Certainly the first world Wests 'entitlement' for pleasure and the growing behaviours that ensue are a part of the mix, but it is also the messages of permissibility that are set by culture shapers, particularly governments and educators, that influence uptake.

Australia has one of the most liberalised drug policy platforms in the world. Whilst the National Drug still has the 'three pillars' of *Supply, Demand* and *Harm Reduction* on drug use, it has been ***Harm Reduction*** that has now become almost the sole pillar in use.

Even though some conservative governments have tried to wrest back this slide, since 1985 it has been a continual and growing mantra that *'drug use is here, you can't stop it, you can only manage it'*; a mantra that has morphed into a cultural meme. To reinforce this ideology and ensure drug use permitting enterprises are maintained, drug policy 'reform' advocates have hijacked health terminologies to sanitise ongoing drug use.

**Harm Reduction** has now little to do with drug use prevention, cessation or recovery, but almost solely focuses on enabling the drug using demographic to keep using, but with one caveat, *“try not to catch or transmit a disease, and stay alive”*. Whilst this *slogan* can sound noble, it is far from healthy or beneficial. Drug use diminishing and ultimate cessation is the single best outcome for the drug user. This has certainly been demonstrated with tobacco prohibition and health campaigns. With drug use reduction and cessation, all other drug related negative health outcomes also cease. This misuse of Harm Reduction emphasis is clearly borne out by such things as;

- a) Introduction of Needle Exchange program to get users to have ‘safer’ drug delivery processes to help prevent ‘BBV’ Blood Borne virus. This program quickly morphed into ‘Needle Distribution’ with zero accountability. Needle Syringe use is ballooning with over 42000 being doled out per month in Greater City of Dandenong alone (yes that’s just one municipality), with no recourse for the non-drug using tax-paying public to see drug use change – This policy is also a significant contributor to growing injecting steroid use.
- b) Medical Alternative Therapies such as Methadone, have been unleashed and unchallenged as a treatment ‘requirement’ with more and more people being prescribed and fewer and fewer getting off drugs – in fact more people are now ‘poly drug’ users as a result of this.
- c) The almost complete disappearance of prevention and recovery focused Demand Reduction strategies from the educational space. Little but ‘lip service’ is paid to prevention.

All this and more, have meant that the voice of ‘inevitability’ and ‘manageability’ of drug use is coming through loud and clear and the anchorless emerging generation are being ‘educated’ by this life, family and community destroying agenda.

It’s time to make serious change. It has been done with the legal drug of tobacco which had a far greater reach and hold on Australian society than this current drug use has. The political and social will to do this must emerge and the vast majority of Australians want this to be so; if not for the sake of a generation, then for sake of averting a health care budget disaster.

Dalgarno Institute recommends

- a) More thorough and sustained demand reduction strategies on all parts of society including media and sustained community education campaigns.
- b) The focus on drug policy toward drug use cessation and recovery/rehabilitation
- c) The winding back of drug use promoting policies such as Needle Syringe Programs to become accountable for deployment/use and policies to be evaluated on how many people they get into treatment, not how many people ‘use’ a service.

END

For comment or interview on this matter, please contact The Dalgarno Institute on 1300 975 002

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