30 January 2019

Professor Dan Howard, SC
Commissioner
Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Professor Howard

Re: Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘Ice’ – limited preliminary consultation under the Terms of Reference – Invitation to respond

Thank you for inviting the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) to provide a written response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘Ice’ and to nominate a particular topic of interest falling within the Commission’s terms of reference.

NCETA is an internationally recognised research centre that works as a catalyst for change in the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) field. NCETA is one of three national centres of excellence focusing on alcohol and other drug issues in Australia. Our research programs have sought to identify strategies to enhance the capacity of the alcohol and other drug related, health, law enforcement and community services sectors to respond to crystal methamphetamine related issues.

NCETA’s specific interest in enhancing the capacity of relevant sectors and workforces to respond to crystal methamphetamine related issues corresponds directly to the Commission’s following terms of reference:

A. The nature, prevalence and impact of crystal methamphetamine (‘ice’) in NSW.

C. Options to strengthen NSW’s response to ice, including law enforcement, education, treatment and rehabilitation responses.

Over the past five years, NCETA has undertaken an extensive research program to identify key issues impacting workers and organisations who are called upon to provide timely and appropriate responses to people experiencing crystal methamphetamine related issues. This program of work has included examinations of the:

- Patterns and prevalence of ‘Ice’ use among rural compared to metropolitan populations
- Patterns and predictors of ‘Ice’ use among workers in different industry and occupational groups
- Workplace safety and productivity costs associated with methamphetamine use and the implications for employers.
In undertaking its Inquiry, we recommend that the Special Commission consider NCETA’s extensive research program and related initiatives with a view to using it to inform the Inquiry’s evidence base.

Please find attached, for your consideration, a brief summary of NCETA’s program of work examining the patterns and prevalence of ‘Ice’ use and initiatives aimed at enhancing the capacity of a diverse range of workforces to address crystal methamphetamine related issues.

We have also reviewed the draft proposal for the conduct of the Inquiry, and we note that the proposed methodology for undertaking the Inquiry is detailed and appropriate and as such we do not have any suggested changes or additions.

NCETA would welcome the opportunity to provide a more detailed submission once the Commission’s Issues Paper has been published.

Please contact me on (08) 82021 7535 or via email: ann.roche@flinders.edu.au if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ann Roche
Director
National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA)
Flinders University
Response from the
National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction
(NCETA)

NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘Ice’
Limited Preliminary Consultation

A. The nature, prevalence and impact of crystal methamphetamine (‘ice’) in NSW

C Options to strengthen NSW’s response to ice, including law enforcement, education, treatment and rehabilitation responses

NCETA has an extensive research program and related initiatives aimed at supporting workers and organisations to respond to crystal methamphetamine-related issues including examinations of the patterns and prevalence of ‘Ice’ use amongst rural and metropolitan populations; patterns of use amongst different industry and occupational groups; and workplace safety and productivity costs associated with ‘Ice’ use and the implications for employers.

Selected examples of NCETA’s research and related initiatives are provided below.

1. Examination of methamphetamine use in rural Australia – implications for service provision

Anecdotal and media reports have suggested that methamphetamine use was higher in rural communities relative to metropolitan areas.

Until 2016, there had been no empirical data to support this speculation. To address this issue, NCETA conducted a seminal examination of methamphetamine use in Australian rural settings. The study investigated whether lifetime and recent methamphetamine use (including crystal methamphetamine) differed among city, regional and rural residents and whether particular populations were more at-risk.

NCETA found a higher level of methamphetamine use in country areas, and that the rate of increase since 2007 was statistically significantly greater than in cities.

The study also found that numerous barriers existed for people living in rural locations to access appropriate and timely treatment and that tailored strategies and interventions were needed to address these issues.

The study was published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health:
2. Addressing crystal methamphetamine use in workplace settings

NCETA has a long track record of workplace alcohol and other drug (including methamphetamine) related research, training, and consultation.

We have undertaken innovative secondary analyses of various data sources, including the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) to determine the prevalence and patterns of methamphetamine use among the Australian workforce by occupational and industry groups. This includes identifying workforce groups e.g., workers aged 20-29, males, trades/blue collar workers and industry groups such as construction, mining, manufacturing and hospitality who are at high risk of using crystal methamphetamine.

NCETA’s innovative research program has identified the workplace as an ideal intervention setting to address crystal methamphetamine issues for the following reasons:

- Access to large numbers of drug users
- Employees spend a lot of time at work
- Employers support safety/productivity improvement and worker wellbeing initiatives
- Existing industrial relations and work health and safety frameworks support prevention and intervention strategies
- Workplace prevention/intervention efforts extend to the wider community.

In collaboration with Lyndon Community* (located in Orange, NSW), NCETA conducted evaluations of training programs to develop workers’ alcohol and other drug related skill sets. The outcomes of the evaluations were published in:


In 2016, NCETA conducted an Australian-first study of workplace safety and productivity costs associated with methamphetamine use and their implications for employers. These included:

- Occupational injury e.g., number and costs
- Workplace absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- Worker turnover
- Workplace drug testing
- Employee wellbeing.

We use our research findings to produce practical resources, policy responses and to assist workplaces develop appropriate responses.

* Now renamed as Lives Lived Well
3. Training for frontline workers and organisations

To address the deficit of resources and support materials for workers, NCETA has developed *Ice: Training for Frontline Workers* as a comprehensive open access online training resource. It is available free of charge and there is no time limit on its availability and/or completion.

The online training is designed to meet the needs of a large group of extremely heterogeneous stakeholders, including frontline workers, supervisors and managers from the health and welfare, education, criminal justice and transport sectors, and provides information and resources to enhance existing skills and knowledge about crystal methamphetamine. There are 7 Modules and 30 Topics covering a range of issues.

NCETA is regularly asked to conduct face-to-face training sessions for frontline workers and to provide the target audiences with practical strategies to address crystal methamphetamine related issues.

In October, 2018, the Centre collaborated with Cracks in the Ice (based at the University of Sydney) to conduct the webinar: *Supporting frontline workers with information and resources about crystal meth*. The webinar was viewed by approximately 400 people and has proven to be one of the most popular of the Cracks in the Ice webinar series. It is available for download [here](#).

4. Information resources to support workers and organisations

NCETA has also developed a series of practical resources to assist workers and organisations to respond to crystal methamphetamine-related issues including:

- *Methamphetamine use in Australia* - explains what methamphetamine is, the proportion of the Australian population who use methamphetamine, how frequently and the ways in which people use methamphetamine, and the harms which may be associated with its use.

- *Methamphetamine: Effects & Responses* – examines the effects and negative consequences of methamphetamine use and intervention options.

- *Ice and the workplace* – informs organisations about how methamphetamine use can impact the workplace, how to recognise the signs of methamphetamine use in employees, and the workplace strategies and responses that can be utilised to reduce the associated risks and harms.

These resources are available for download from the NCETA [website](#).