



THE AUSTRALIAN METHYLAMPHETAMINE MARKET

THE NATIONAL PICTURE



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LIMITATIONS ON STATISTICS AND DISCLOSURE OF FINDINGS

The statistics contained in this report are the most current as at the time of publication. The statistical data contained in this report is primarily provided to the ACC by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the Australian Federal Police and state and territory police services. These agencies also contribute intelligence which enables the Commission to compile a national picture of the methylamphetamine problem.¹

Statistics presented in this report likely under-represent the size of the methylamphetamine market due to a legacy of recording in law enforcement databases. User surveys, another method of estimating the size of the market, also under-estimate user numbers for a range of reasons.

Further to this, legal provisions prevent the ACC from publically disclosing detailed information about the nature of the matters contained in this report. This includes the disclosure of information specifically referencing particular individuals or groups involved in the methylamphetamine market. As such, the report focuses on describing the broad nature of the threats and includes intelligence judgments about the likely future trajectory of these issues.

¹ Some statistics, particularly those which cover international markets, take several years to produce, and therefore may seem dated.

CEO FOREWORD

On my first day at the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) the *2012–13 Illicit Drug Data Report* was released at one of Victoria’s oldest hospitals, The Alfred. This hospital was a symbol representing one of many hospital emergency rooms across the country increasingly occupied by patients on methylamphetamine. Methylamphetamine places a huge burden on our healthcare system and its workers, ambulance officers, police and the community—those who see first hand the chaos created by this drug on a daily basis.

Over the past five years, intelligence and data continue to show an emerging national and international concern with methylamphetamine, particularly crystal methylamphetamine (‘ice’). This is demonstrated by the November 2014 seizure by the New South Wales Joint Organised Crime Group of two tonnes of MDMA and more than 800 kilograms of methylamphetamine—worth a combined estimated street value of \$1.5 billion. It was demonstrated again in March 2015 by the detection of 230 kilograms of liquid methylamphetamine by the Polaris Joint Waterfront Taskforce following a one year investigation. The availability and addictive nature of methylamphetamine has created new demand in urban, rural and disadvantaged communities where its destructive impact is growing at a significant rate.

Serious and organised crime groups are thriving on the profits generated through methylamphetamine. The price paid for methylamphetamine in Australia is among the highest in the world. This has driven interest in the market by transnational organised crime groups with access to offshore industrial-scale manufacturing, as well as by domestic organised crime groups. Significant border detections, national seizures and arrests highlight the continued focus by law enforcement agencies on the response, as has the work of respective health and education professionals.

Notwithstanding this, the growing ‘take up’ rate of methylamphetamine use and consequential community harms, along with continued concern among a broad cross-section of the Australian community, has led the ACC to develop a concise unclassified intelligence picture on the threat posed by methylamphetamine.

In releasing this report, I hope to inform all members of the Australian community who are concerned by the impact of methylamphetamine, so that they can better understand the threat, the role of serious and organised crime in the problem and the need to collectively work on effective responses. This report will contribute to Australia’s collective response efforts to what is becoming a significant national issue.



Chris Dawson APM
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Crime Commission

AIM

This report aims to provide a concise understanding of the nature of organised crime involvement in the Australian methylamphetamine market.

The ACC monitors all illicit drug markets through its High Risk and Emerging Drugs Special Operation. Through this work, the ACC has assessed that methylamphetamine poses the greatest threat to the Australian public of all illicit drug types.

The ACC's annual *Illicit Drug Data Report* provides a detailed and comprehensive statistical picture of the illicit drug threat to Australia and provides an in-depth statistical analysis of the illicit drug market. *The Australian Methylamphetamine Market: The National Picture* is a complementary intelligence report.

This report provides a brief summation of the national picture of the methylamphetamine threat. It explores the international and national dimensions of the methylamphetamine market, outlines the role of organised crime in driving the Australian market, the nature of the market, and the harms associated with methylamphetamine use. It also examines the diversion of precursor chemicals required to produce methylamphetamine in clandestine laboratories. It does this by consolidating open source information with operational and strategic intelligence collected by the ACC and Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies.

The release of this report is designed to:

- inform the widest possible audience, including those who are not privy to classified law enforcement intelligence
- generate discussion and dialogue about what can be done to tackle the methylamphetamine problem
- enable individuals, friends and families to understand the nature of the harms caused by methylamphetamine and influence those around them to minimise harm
- inform the national response to the methylamphetamine market.

OVERVIEW

Methylamphetamine is a synthetic stimulant drug and a type of amphetamine-type stimulant that is illegal in all Australian jurisdictions. Methylamphetamine comes in several forms, including tablet, powder, crystal and oil. The most commonly available form in Australia is crystalline ('ice') followed by powder ('speed').

Of all illicit drugs, the ACC assesses that methylamphetamine, and in particular crystal methylamphetamine, poses the highest risk to the Australian community and is of significant national concern.

The ACC has identified significant changes in the nature and scale of the methylamphetamine market since 2010, and particularly since 2013. The purity has increased and crystal methylamphetamine is now the dominant form of the drug.

Of particular concern is the diversification in the supply of methylamphetamine to the market. Where domestic production has traditionally been adequate to supply a relatively stable user base, since 2010 there has been a considerable increase in the number and weight of detections at the Australian border. Several seizure records have been set, and this upward trend is continuing. This growth has occurred without a concurrent fall in domestic production, as indicated by the number of clandestine laboratory detections and the high volume of precursor seizures.

Serious and organised crime is driving these trends and user demand.

More than 60 per cent of Australia's highest risk criminal targets, including transnational targets, are involved in the methylamphetamine market. The majority of these targets are involved in multiple drug markets. The growth in scale of serious and organised crime involvement is the result of the significant profits to be made, the move by crime groups to poly-drug² trafficking and an increase by users in poly-drug use.

Serious and organised crime groups are also increasingly involved in the importation and trafficking of precursor chemicals, and are adept at developing new manufacturing techniques to avoid controls over sales of key precursor chemicals.

The ACC assesses that the Australian methylamphetamine market will continue to grow in the short to medium term. This expansion can only be addressed by the collective efforts of the Australian Government, state and territory governments, non-government organisations, industry and the community.

2 More than one drug type.

THE METHYLAMPHETAMINE MARKET

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Amphetamine-type stimulants, such as methylamphetamine, are the second most widely used illicit drug in the world, following cannabis. In 2014, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported an estimated 13.9 million to 54.8 million users worldwide.³

Since 1990, methylamphetamine manufacture has been reported in 70 countries, with clandestine laboratories being located in new locations every year.⁴ Crime groups in China, Burma, Indonesia, Mexico and Iran are among the largest producers of methylamphetamine. Emerging production hubs include the Philippines, Russia and Ghana.

Global amphetamine seizures have grown in weight each year since 2010. In 2012, the weight seized by law enforcement increased by 15 per cent—from 123 tonnes in 2011 to 144 tonnes in 2012. Methylamphetamine comprised approximately 80 per cent of these seizures.⁵

Increases in border detections of methylamphetamine worldwide provide further evidence of the growth of the market. The World Customs Organization (WCO) reported methylamphetamine border detections increased from about 9 tonnes in 2012 to 12 tonnes in 2013.⁶

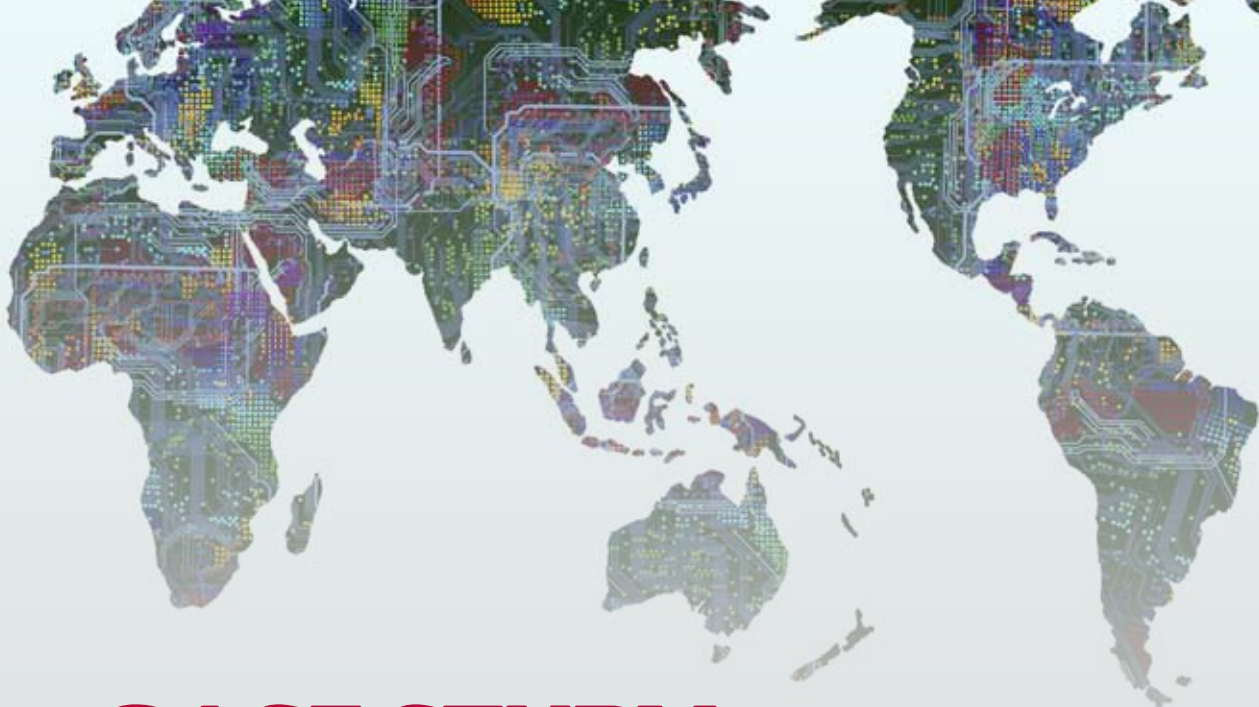
Transnational serious and organised crime groups feature prominently in the global methylamphetamine market. These groups use multiple countries as transit points for trafficking methylamphetamine and precursor chemicals to and from Asia and the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. Drug trafficking syndicates from Africa and Iran, and others with links to China and Hong Kong, traffic methylamphetamine into and through South-East Asia by air transport and sea cargo containers. Indian drug trafficking networks smuggle precursor chemicals to drug manufacturing locations in nearby countries.

3 UNODC 2014, Global synthetic drugs assessment: Amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances, UNODC, Vienna.

4 UNODC 2013, Global SMART Update, 10 September, Vol. 10, UNODC, Vienna.

5 UNODC 2014, World Drug Report 2014, UNODC, Vienna.

6 WCO 2014, Illicit Trade Report 2013, WCO, Brussels.



CASE STUDY

DRUG CARTEL INVOLVEMENT IN THE METHYLAMPHETAMINE MARKET

Mexican drug trafficking cartels are becoming increasingly involved in the global methylamphetamine market. These groups have actively sought international criminal partners in Australia, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria and Spain.

The cartels are using these partnerships to expand their markets throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. They are taking advantage of existing distribution networks, using transiting routes through a number of countries to conceal country of origin, and exploiting countries with weak regulatory or enforcement regimes.

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS (CONTINUED)

It is difficult to accurately assess the impact of the global trends on the Australian market. However, the production and availability of methylamphetamine worldwide has been an influencing factor in the emergence of imported methylamphetamine on the Australian market.

There is a legitimate market for the chemicals used to produce methylamphetamine, which create opportunities for organised crime to illegally divert these chemicals for methylamphetamine production. Countries with large chemical industries, such as China and India, are particularly targeted by transnational organised crime groups. Once obtained these chemicals may be illicitly shipped internationally to end user countries, or used in clandestine laboratories in the country of origin.

Many Australian organised crime groups have capacity to operate within countries where precursors are freely available or in partnership with groups from those countries. Many essential precursors are not controlled internationally, at the border, or domestically due to their varied legitimate uses. Illicit importations of controlled precursors have been detected through the identification of mislabelling and concealments, or importations in quantities which would seem inconsistent with the nominated intended use. An emerging method is precursor masking, in which the chemical structure of the substance is altered to avoid detection at initial screening.



CASE STUDY

ORGANISED CRIMINAL SHIFTS IN RESPONSE TO LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REFORM

The evolution of the ContacNT market provides a useful case study of the ability of organised crime groups to adapt to changes in the availability and quality of precursors. ContacNT is a brand name of a cold and flu medication produced for the Chinese domestic market. It was valuable to organised crime groups because until relatively recently it contained the highest percentage of pseudoephedrine (PSE) of any cold and flu medication and its purchase was, at the time, unregulated in China.

Prior to 2009, detections at the Australian border were limited, although it was known to be regularly shipped illicitly to New Zealand. From 2009 until 2011 detections increased, followed by a significant increase from 2011 to 2013. It was in this period that Project STOP (which is focused on preventing the diversion of PSE) had been widely adopted and sourcing PSE domestically became more difficult.

In 2009 there were nine detections of ContacNT totalling 20.4 kilograms. In the period 2011–13, more than one tonne of the substance was detected. ContacNT is generally concealed within food or consumer goods, and has been identified as being re-routed from China through third countries prior to arrival in Australia, almost certainly in an attempt to avoid targeting by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

Since 2012, China has begun implementing regulations around PSE products. As these regulations have taken effect, the product has been more difficult to divert. Additionally, it is reported that ContacNT now contains a lower percentage of PSE. In demonstrating their ability to adapt quickly to changes in their environment, intelligence suggests that, as a result of these changes in China, organised crime groups have shifted their focus to importing pure ephedrine.

NATIONAL TRENDS

The Australian methylamphetamine market remained fairly stable in the decade to 2010. However, in the past five years there has been significant growth in the detected importation, manufacture and supply of the drug. Following cannabis and MDMA, methylamphetamine is reported to be the third most commonly used illicit drug in Australia among people who have recently used drugs.

The purity of methylamphetamine has also increased, making its use even more dangerous, and there has been a growth in the availability and use of crystal methylamphetamine. Australian users of methylamphetamine pay a premium price compared to those in other countries, making importations to Australia attractive and profitable. According to the UNODC, the average street price per gram of methylamphetamine in China is USD\$80, whereas in Australia it is USD\$500. Wholesale prices in Australia have been recorded as ranging from A\$90 000 to A\$325 000 per kilogram. As with methylamphetamine, the precursor chemical market is characterised by high demand and high profits.

Of all illicit drugs, the ACC assesses that methylamphetamine, and in particular crystal methylamphetamine, poses the highest risk to the Australian community. The following factors all support this conclusion:

- the rapid growth of the methylamphetamine problem across cities, regional and remote communities
- the harms methylamphetamine poses to the individual, including psychosis and other long term psychological and behavioural problems
- the links between methylamphetamine use and other crime types including violent crimes against the person and property crime
- the harm to the community (including families of users, innocent bystanders and road users, frontline staff in hospitals, law enforcement and emergency services, and non-government organisations)
- the economic impact to governments and the community, and redirection of finite resources away from other harmful activity
- the impact on legitimate industry sectors (such as the pharmaceutical, chemical and transport sectors) through diversion of chemicals and transport of illicit substances
- the significant profit to be made by organised crime groups in the importation, domestic manufacture, sale and distribution of methylamphetamine
- the presence of both importation and domestic manufacture of methylamphetamine, unlike other illicit drugs.

ROLE OF ORGANISED CRIME

Organised crime groups, including transnational groups, are increasingly involved in the Australian methylamphetamine market. Some groups which traditionally focused on importing particular illicit drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, are now shifting the focus of their activities to methylamphetamine.

The ACC's intelligence highlights:

- serious and organised crime groups have become entrenched in all levels of the Australian methylamphetamine market, with no one group dominant
- more than 60 per cent of the entities on the National Criminal Target List⁷ are involved in the methylamphetamine and/or precursor market. Of these, more than 80 per cent are also involved in other drug markets
- the importation, manufacture and trafficking of methylamphetamine in Australia, and the importation of precursor chemicals, is supported by members of Australian-based outlaw motorcycle gangs, Australian organised crime groups as well as persons of Middle Eastern, Eastern European and West African backgrounds, and Vietnamese, Chinese, Canadian, US and Mexican serious and organised crime groups
- serious and organised crime groups are increasingly involved in the importation and trafficking of precursors, are adept at exploiting regulatory weaknesses in Australia and overseas, and at adapting to fluctuations in precursor availability
- serious and organised crime continues to develop new methods for manufacturing methylamphetamine which rely primarily on uncontrolled chemicals.

Australian-based serious and organised crime groups now have far greater access to high purity imported methylamphetamine, precursors and pre-precursors⁸—through connections that permit the groups to engage effectively with methylamphetamine importing networks from a number of continents. These groups also have ready access, via the internet and underground literature, to detailed information on alternative methylamphetamine and precursor production processes.

7 The National Criminal Target List is a national listing of currently active and nationally significant organised criminal groups operating in Australia contributed to by Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies. The total number of entities listed is classified.

8 The term 'pre-precursor' refers to a chemical substance which cannot directly be converted to methylamphetamine, but can be used to create a direct precursor chemical.



CASE STUDY

THE GLOBAL METHYLAMPHETAMINE MARKETPLACE

12 Iranian produced methylamphetamine is being trans-shipped through South East Asia to Australia, and is characterised by very high purity. This indicates large-scale production utilising high-quality materials. West African organised crime groups are also prominent traffickers of methylamphetamine. Their trafficking routes extend to South-East Asia and the Middle East and into Europe and Australia. From a global perspective, there appears to currently be significant production of methylamphetamine in Mexico. Mexican crime groups are importing cocaine and methylamphetamine into Australia.

It is now not unusual for persons of different ethnic or criminal backgrounds to collaborate at different stages of the methylamphetamine supply chain, or to collaborate on an importation or local supply. For example, methylamphetamine imported into Australia is likely to have passed through several countries with the assistance of a range of transnational crime groups.



CASE STUDY

DIVERSION OF CHEMICALS FROM LEGITIMATE INDUSTRY FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF METHYLAMPHETAMINE

The ACC has identified an individual purchasing, and receiving, multiple kilograms of a non-controlled precursor chemical from a domestic supplier. The seller was identified to be the proprietor of a legitimate chemical supply company. Purchases by individuals, particularly in large quantities, are generally suspicious as the precursor chemical can be used in clandestine laboratories to produce either or both of two illicit drugs. In this particular case, there was evidence that the chemical was intended for use in illicit drug production.

ROLE OF ORGANISED CRIME (CONTINUED)

Diversion of legitimate chemicals continues to be exploited by organised crime. Diversion has been identified to be occurring from the Australian chemical industry, the legitimate transport chain, waste destruction facilities, break and enters at pharmacies and use of trusted insiders.

Several instances have been identified in which organised crime group members, or their associates, have established a chemical-related business with the intention of appearing legitimate and using it as a cover for purchasing and possessing precursors.

Australian organised crime groups are also involved in all stages of the methylamphetamine market. Organised crime groups often establish partnerships to exploit their wide drug distribution networks, as well as their involvement in legitimate industries, such as the transport sector, licensed premises and security companies. Some groups have used their member network to expand the methylamphetamine market, including to regional, rural and remote areas which have not previously been exploited by organised crime groups.

These mutually-beneficial partnerships have also enabled the laundering of illicit profits made from methylamphetamine. Organised crime groups that have cooperated in relation to methylamphetamine use those same connections to facilitate the movement of proceeds of crime, particularly off-shore. This money is often reinvested into criminal activity. Proceeds of other criminal activity, such as cannabis production, have been used to fund methylamphetamine importation. Such involvement has potentially broadened methylamphetamine sourcing and distribution capabilities.



CASE STUDY

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANG INVOLVEMENT IN THE METHYLAMPHETAMINE MARKET

In 2010, the Rebels Motorcycle Club established a chapter in Mildura, Victoria and subsequently entrenched themselves in the area. Members of this crime group commenced trafficking large quantities of methylamphetamine into Mildura by deliberately targeting youth to distribute the drugs at nightclubs and parties. Eventually, members of the Comanchero OMCG allegedly took over this drug trade and employed violence and intimidation to consolidate their position in the area.

USE AND HARMS

AUSTRALIAN METHYLAMPHETAMINE USERS

Australian drug users now prefer crystal methylamphetamine over the powder form. Crystal methylamphetamine is perceived to be more desirable by users as it can be smoked rather than injected and perceived to be more potent or 'purer' than powder. Methylamphetamine is highly addictive and is used more often and for longer periods than other drugs.

There is also a greater tendency toward poly-drug use across Australia's illicit drug market, increasing the pool of methylamphetamine users. Organised crime groups are reflecting this trend by now dealing in multiple illicit drug types and mixing other illicit drugs into methylamphetamine in an attempt to increase addiction levels.

These factors, and the ready availability of methylamphetamine, have created new demand in areas where the drug has not previously been present. This includes regional, rural and remote communities.

HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH METHYLAMPHETAMINE

Personal harm

Psychological, medical and social consequences of methylamphetamine use are as devastating to the community as they are to the individual user. There are a number of key impacts to users and the community:

- methylamphetamine users, particularly crystal methylamphetamine users, are at increased risk of a range of health-related harms, most notably increased risk of psychosis and mental illness. Long-term use can result in memory loss, aggression, increased risk of heart failure and stroke
- crystal methylamphetamine users are more likely to demonstrate violent behaviours, including assaults and sexual assaults. These harms have placed significant demands on the resources of the health care system which treats both users and victims of the violent behaviour. Crystal methylamphetamine also poses risks to front-line law enforcement and health care officers, as well as the family and friends of drug users or manufacturers
- children present in the homes of methylamphetamine users or manufacturers are particularly at risk of ingesting associated chemicals. Additionally, many methylamphetamine users are likely to neglect parenting responsibilities and expose children to additional illegal activities
- illicit drug use is of concern in Indigenous communities throughout Australia, particularly so for methylamphetamine use. According to available data on self-reported use of illicit substances, methylamphetamine is the third most common illicit substance used in Indigenous communities, with 5 per cent indicating amphetamines/speed use in the 12 months prior to survey.¹⁰ Some of the adverse consequences stemming from drug use and dependency voiced in many Indigenous communities included domestic violence, tensions from sourcing money for substance use, declining participation in community life, child neglect and sexual exploitation of young people.

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2011, *Substance use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, AIHW, Canberra, viewed 20 May 2013, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737418268>>.



THE LINK BETWEEN METHYLAMPHETAMINE USE AND PSYCHOSIS

Many studies have found a correlation between methylamphetamine use and psychosis. A recent Australian study concluded that users of crystal methylamphetamine are five times more likely to suffer psychotic symptoms while taking the drug than when they were abstinent. The research studied 278 methylamphetamine users from Sydney and Brisbane between 2006 and 2010 and excluded anyone with existing psychotic tendencies. The incidence of psychosis increased sharply from 7 per cent to 48 per cent as a consequence of the quantity of methylamphetamine used by the subjects. The rate of psychosis reported by those who also reported frequent use of cannabis and/or alcohol ranged between 61 per cent and 69 per cent.¹¹

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11 McKetin, R, Lubman D, Baker, A, Dawe, S, Ali, R 2013, 'Dose-Related Psychotic Symptoms in Chronic Methamphetamine Users: Evidence from a Prospective Longitudinal Study', *JAMA Psychiatry*. vol. 70(3), pp. 319–323.

HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH METHYLAMPHETAMINE (CONTINUED)

Manufacture

Operators of clandestine laboratories manufacturing methylamphetamine often have little concern for the environment, or for public safety. Methylamphetamine manufacture in clandestine laboratories has resulted in explosions which have severely damaged properties and resulted in serious injuries and death. These labs are often located in residential areas, therefore posing a risk to the surrounding community.

It is estimated that a clandestine laboratory manufacturing methylamphetamine generates up to 10 kilograms of hazardous and toxic waste for each kilogram of pure methylamphetamine produced. Toxic chemicals and residues have been found dumped into drains, rivers, public parks, on roadsides and in sewerage systems, posing immediate and long-term environmental health risks.

The chemicals and equipment used in clandestine laboratories manufacturing methylamphetamine and the toxic gases produced are extremely dangerous and pose severe health risks, not only to the occupants of the premises, but also to local residents and emergency personnel. The greatest immediate risks are chemical burns and respiratory damage for persons exposed to the release of reagents¹² or the by-products from chemical fires and explosions at clandestine laboratory sites.

Crime

A range of criminal activity is associated with methylamphetamine use and manufacture, including property offences, money laundering, firearms trafficking and violence. Intelligence also indicates that a number of crime groups represented in the methylamphetamine market are also involved in firearms trafficking, with some of these groups suspected of being involved in the ongoing supply of firearms and drugs in a number of states.

A number of organised crime groups in the methylamphetamine market have been linked to murders and violent assaults to protect or increase their market share, or for reasons unrelated to their drug manufacture and supply. Extortion is another potentially violent activity for which groups represented in the methylamphetamine market have regularly come to notice.

¹² Reagents are substances used to cause a chemical reaction that modifies a precursor's molecular structure. For example, when hydriodic acid and red phosphorous are mixed with the precursors ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the resulting compound is methylamphetamine.



THE LINK BETWEEN METHYLAMPHETAMINE AND VIOLENCE

One of the most publicised psychological manifestations of regular methylamphetamine use is aggression, sometimes accompanied by violence. A 2006 St Vincent's Hospital study of the characteristics of methylamphetamine-related and other non-methylamphetamine-related presentations to the Emergency Department found that methylamphetamine users were more aggressive, violent and dangerous than persons not under the influence of methylamphetamine.¹³ This poses a safety risk to hospital staff and other personnel. Extremely agitated and aggressive patients accounted for 18 per cent and violent and self-destructive patients accounted for 3 per cent of methylamphetamine-related presentations. These figures were much higher compared with the non-methylamphetamine-related presentations, which recorded presentation rates of 2 per cent extremely agitated and aggressive patients and a figure of nil for recorded violent and self-destructive patients.

13 Bunting, PJ, Fulde, GWO & Forster, SL 2007, 'Comparison of crystalline methamphetamine ('ice') users and other patients with toxicology-related problems presenting to a hospital emergency department', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 187(10), pp. 564-566, viewed 14 May 2013, <<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2007/187/10/comparison-crystalline-methamphetamine-ice-users-and-other-patients-toxicology>>.

OUTLOOK

The methylamphetamine market will almost certainly remain entrenched and continue to grow in the medium term. Proceeds from this market will continue to drive the illicit economy. Innovative money laundering methodologies will likely be seen in attempts to conceal the profits. At least some of these illicit profits will be re-invested into the illicit drug market.

Transnational organised crime involvement in the Australian methylamphetamine and precursor markets is entrenched, and will likely expand in the medium term. The highly lucrative nature of the Australian market, combined with the availability and relatively low cost of methylamphetamine and precursors internationally, will sustain this involvement.

Looking through the lens of supply reduction, there is currently an unprecedented level of organised crime involvement in high-volume importation and trafficking of precursors internationally and domestically. These groups have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to adapt rapidly and dynamically to changes in legislation, law enforcement targeting and the market. They have been seen to adjust their sourcing, diversion and importation methods, chemical choices and manufacturing methodologies to adapt to market changes and avoid detection. When these factors are combined with the tendency of groups to diversify their range of illicit commodities, some organised crime groups will be particularly resilient to law enforcement disruption efforts.

The addictive nature of methylamphetamine, combined with increasing user numbers, will likely create an increased burden on law enforcement and the health sector. Violent behaviour associated with methylamphetamine use, particularly crystal methylamphetamine use, is likely to involve non-users, such as first responders, hospital staff and members of the community. The increase in addiction-related crimes such as burglaries and violent assaults and drug-impaired driving will also place an increased burden on law enforcement agencies, and increase public concern.

The introduction in Australia of controls over many precursor chemicals has led to a decline in identified domestic diversion of traditional precursors. However, these restrictions appear to have been one factor in the growth in precursors illicitly imported and in the diversion of a broader range of non-controlled chemicals for domestic manufacture of precursors and drugs using novel methods.

It has long been recognised that responses to the methylamphetamine market are best driven by an overarching national strategy and coordinated multi-agency policy, legislative, regulatory, intelligence and investigative activities. In addition to law enforcement, the health sector, industry, educators and the not-for-profit sector share important components of the response.

DEFINITIONS

AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS

Some data received by the ACC and included in ACC assessments refers to the more generic term amphetamine-type stimulants, which includes substances other than methylamphetamine, e.g. amphetamine and phenethylamines including 3,4-methylenedioxymethylamphetamine (MDMA, 'ecstasy'). This is the result of historical data recording practices. The term amphetamine-type stimulants will be retained in some circumstances in this report, with the range of substances included noted where possible.

CLANDESTINE LABORATORIES

A clandestine laboratory (also known as a 'clan lab') refers to any operation in which illicit drugs are covertly manufactured. These facilities range from crude, improvised processes to dedicated operations utilising complex processes and equipment capable of producing large amounts of methylamphetamine.

CRYSTAL METHYLAMPHETAMINE

There is a common—if often erroneous—perception held by the public, users and sometimes within government agencies that crystal methylamphetamine is a more potent and/or pure form of methylamphetamine. While this is often the case, appearance alone is not a reliable indicator of purity. The terms crystal methylamphetamine and ice are used inter-changeably.

METHYLAMPHETAMINE

Although the terms 'methylamphetamine' and 'methamphetamine' are synonymous, and both terms are used in different Australian legislation, the ACC uses the term 'methylamphetamine'.

Methylamphetamine has four common forms—tablet, powder ('speed'), crystal ('ice') and oil. Methylamphetamine can be swallowed, snorted, smoked or injected. Crystal methylamphetamine is generally heated and the vapours inhaled. It can also be injected after being dissolved in water.

PRECURSOR

The term precursor is used to refer to any chemical substance which can be used to produce methylamphetamine. The term 'pre-precursor' refers to a chemical substance which cannot directly be converted to methylamphetamine, but can be used to create a direct precursor chemical.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Everyone can play a role in responding to organised criminal activity in Australia by reporting suspicious activity to your local police or calling Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

For more information visit www.crimecommission.gov.au.

For health and educational material visit www.drugs.health.gov.au.

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