

**Question on Notice
No. 595
Asked on 18 April 2007**

Ms DARLING asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the significant media coverage in recent months regarding illicit amphetamine use in general and the use of 'ice' in particular-

What is the Queensland Police Service doing to crack down on this use of illicit drugs?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) continues to proactively address the problem of illicit amphetamines, which include methamphetamine and crystal methamphetamine, commonly referred to as 'ice'.

The QPS response to illicit amphetamines is in line with the National Drug Strategy and includes strategies based on supply reduction, demand reduction, treatment and a direct response to substance misuse.

The QPS proactively targets suspects and recidivist drug offenders and participates in joint agency operations and investigations with other State and Federal law enforcement agencies including the Australian Crime Commission, Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission, Australian Customs and Australian Federal Police. These successful multi-agency operations build their success on the continued sharing and exchange of criminal intelligence, enabling offenders at all levels within the illicit drug industry to be captured during these operations.

The QPS, in partnership with the Queensland Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, established Project STOP in April 2006. Project STOP was introduced as a proactive strategy to provide a 'quality use of medicines approach' to pseudoephedrine sales. Pseudoephedrine is a common ingredient in cold and influenza medicines but can also be used in the manufacture of illicit drugs. Outcomes directly attributable to STOP include:

2006

297 suspect crime files created; 269 criminal charges were preferred against 43 persons, including drug trafficking and supply of amphetamines. In addition, 7 clandestine laboratories were located throughout Queensland.

2007 (to date)

85 suspect crime files created; 15 criminal charges have been preferred against 3 persons, including drug trafficking and production of illicit drugs (methamphetamine). Two clandestine laboratories located thus far in 2007 were as a direct result of Project STOP.

Currently over 90% of Queensland pharmacists are using the Project STOP database on a regular basis. At the Australasian Police Ministers' Council in November 2006 I called on my State and Territory counterparts to adopt Project STOP, as our best defence at putting 'pseudo shoppers' on notice. I am pleased to report that Project STOP will be rolled out nationally by mid-2007.

The QPS is also represented at a senior level on the Queensland Government's Ice-Breaker Strategy Taskforce (the Taskforce). The Taskforce was formed in late 2006 to inform and guide Government on strategies to tackle the manufacture, dealing and possession of 'ice' in the community.

A joint QPS and National Drug Strategy initiative called '*Putting the Brakes on Speed*' was also launched in 2006. Aside from lectures to community groups, this project has produced and distributed a large number of information posters and other products within the community. The aim of the project is to make the community and specifically the chemical industry aware of the existence of clandestine laboratories in the community as well as identifying suspect indications of drug production. The *Putting the Brakes on Speed* project encourages members of the public and chemical suppliers to report all suspicious behaviour or purchases to the QPS Chemical Diversion Desk for further investigation.

The QPS State Drug Investigation Unit recently facilitated the 17th Clandestine Laboratory Investigation Course between 16 and 27 April 2007. These illegal and highly dangerous laboratories are set up by criminals to manufacture illicit drugs. Course attendees are trained in 'best practice' methods of investigating clandestine drug laboratories. Twenty-three investigators from throughout Australia and New Zealand attended the course.

In October 2006, the Beattie Government introduced amendments to the *Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987*. The amendments widened the scope of offences committed by criminals involved in illicit drug production by making it an offence in Queensland to have possession of items such as condensers, distillation heads, heating mantles and pill presses, which are often connected to illicit drug manufacture.

In a further boost to the ability of Queensland Police to combat illicit drugs, powder-drug detection dogs can now be used in licensed premises. These dogs are highly trained at detecting drugs such as amphetamines. The Queensland Police and Liquor Licensing Officers conduct coordinated operations to search licensed premises for illicit drugs during which patrons suspected of having possession of powder drugs are also searched.

The Beattie Government takes a hard line on drugs and will continue to support the Queensland Police in their ongoing strategies to target those that use, sell and manufacture illicit drugs.