

Question on Notice
No. 640
Asked on 30 April 2008

MS MALE asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport (MS SPENCE)—

QUESTION:

Would she advise the House on how the Queensland Police Service is cracking down on drug production and supply in this State and what steps are being taken particularly in relation to outlaw motor cycle gangs?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) continues to use various overt and covert investigative strategies to address the production and supply and drugs throughout the State.

These strategies include proactive targeting of individuals and recidivist drug offenders, joint agency operations/investigations with other state and federal authorities including the Australian Crime Commission, Crime and Misconduct Commission, Australian Customs Service and Australian Federal Police and the timely exchange of criminal intelligence.

The Service also continues to form strategic alliances with government, non-government and the community/corporate sector to combat the production and distribution of drugs.

The Service is represented at a senior level on the Queensland Government's Alcohol and Drug Service Reform Committee which is an implementation committee following recommendations provided by the Ice-Breaker Strategy Taskforce.

The Service, in partnership with the Queensland Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (Queensland Branch), established Project STOP in April 2006. Project STOP was introduced as a proactive strategy to provide a 'quality use of medicines approach' to pseudoephedrine (PSE) sales, which can be diverted to illicit drug manufacture.

Currently, over 95% of Queensland pharmacists are using the Project STOP database on a regular basis. The Project is in the process of being rolled out nationally.

The State Drug Investigation Unit, State Crime Operations Command recently facilitated the 18th Clandestine Laboratory Investigation Course. Eighteen (18) investigators from throughout the Queensland and interstate attended this course.

Attendees are trained in 'best practice' methods of investigating clandestine drug laboratories, use of breathing apparatus, basic chemical identification and the safe handling, storage and transportation of dangerous and toxic chemicals which have been used in the manufacture of illicit amphetamine type substances.

The QPS continues with the '*Putting the Brakes on Speed*' initiative which was launched in 2006. This project provides lectures to community groups, pharmacists, hotel and motel association and members of the real estate industry of Queensland. This project also produced and distributed a large number of information posters and other products within the community. The project was primarily aimed at raising community awareness in relation to the production and distribution of drugs, in particular methylamphetamine.

In early 2008, this government introduced further amendments to the *Drugs Misuse Act 1987*. The amendments will significantly tighten the controls placed on precursor chemicals which are used in drug production.

Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs (OMCGs) are an ongoing investigative and intelligence priority for the Queensland Police Service based on their known involvement in criminal activity and propensity for violence within Australia and internationally.

As a result of the Queensland State Government's commitment to the policing of OMCGs, the Outlaw Motor Cycle Gang Task Force (Hydra) was established in September 2006, specifically to target the criminal activities of OMCGs.

The Taskforce aims to disrupt and dismantle OMCGs in Queensland. The focus for the Task Force involves a multi faceted approach in providing a tactical, operational and strategic direction through the use of overt and covert investigative methodology and other contemporary policing techniques.

The strategy includes ongoing liaison with interstate law enforcement agencies in relation to the policing of OMCGs and the ACC's OMCG National Intelligence Task Force. Regular consultation with the dedicated OMCG unit of the South Australia Police, Operation Avatar, and New South Wales Police Gangs Squad is also undertaken

Information sharing between the Task Force and external agencies about OMCGs is assisted by the ACC's Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (ALEIN) and national CrimTrac systems.

The Task Force has been involved in a number of major investigations involving arson, firearm, violence and drug related offences. This has resulted in large numbers of arrests and the seizure of significant amounts of drugs, firearms and property. Since February 2007 the operations have resulted in 223 persons arrested on a total of 660 charges.