



# Impact Of Ice and Drugs On Communities

[What Is The Ice Problem?](#) Australian Government publication:

In 2013, 8.3% of Australia's population had been a victim of an illicit, drug-related incident such as verbal and physical abuse.

The manufacturing of ice produces hazardous waste that poses immediate risks to partners and children of ice users and manufacturers, local residents and emergency personnel.

There is significant domestic manufacture and importation of ice. More than 60% of Australia's most significant organised criminal groups are involved in the methylamphetamine market.

There appears to be an increase in the availability and use of methylamphetamine, in particular ice, in regional, rural and disadvantaged communities – areas where the drug has not been previously prevalent.

[Crystal clear – the Ice Epidemic affecting the community and criminal justice system](#)

Ice/crystal meth has become the most potent and dangerous drug on Australian streets and its effects are being felt in hospitals, schools and, most particularly, in the criminal justice system. The effect that this epidemic has had on violent and drug crime and, by extension, the prosecution of such offences is nothing short of explosive and astonishing.

In its report on the crystal meth trade in Australia, the Australian Crime Commission labelled it the 'highest risk to the Australian community and is of significant national concern'.

Since the epidemic began in 2013, the number of ambulance attendances for drug related injuries has increased. Our community has also seen an increase in reports to child protection agencies since ice became a serious problem. It is estimated that 1/3 of reports of child abuse and neglect involve the drug, ice, and now a new demographic of middle class parents are attracting the attention of human services departments. Middle class parents who were otherwise loving and attentive are becoming neglectful and even abusive after taking up the drug.

Corrections officers and police are often, quite unfairly, placed in a position where they have to look after high risk individuals suffering from withdrawal and the effects of the drug itself.

[Community Impact from Methamphetamine](#)

Sometimes people forget that methamphetamine hurts not only individuals, but families, neighbourhoods and entire communities as well. You might not be using methamphetamine or know anyone who is - but that doesn't mean it's not having an effect on you.



A methamphetamine lab can operate unnoticed in a neighbourhood for years, causing serious health hazards to everyone around. Here are some ways that methamphetamine could find its way into your life even if you or a family member doesn't use the drug:

### **Environmental Harm**

For each pound of methamphetamine produced, five to six pounds of hazardous waste are generated, posing immediate and long-term environmental health risks. The chemicals used to make methamphetamine are toxic, and the lab operators routinely dump waste into streams, rivers, fields, backyards and sewage systems, which can in turn contaminate water resources for humans and animals.

Also, the poisonous vapours produced during cooking permeate the halls and carpets of houses and buildings, often making them uninhabitable. Cleaning up these sites requires specialized training and costs an average of \$2,000-\$4,000 per site in funds that come out of the already-strained budgets of state police, local police, or property owners. Property owners are often held liable for the cost of the clean-up, so if rental landlords find that their tenant has been operating a methamphetamine lab on or in their property, or if landowners find clandestine labs on their property, they could face devastating financial issues.

### **Crime**

Along with the selling of the drug, methamphetamine labs can breed crime, including burglaries, thefts and even murder. Both teenagers and adults addicted to the drug and who have no income to pay for their habit, may steal valuables from their own homes or even their friends' homes.

High on methamphetamine, there's no telling what a person would do if provoked - people have been killed for not owing up to a drug payment or coming through on a transaction. This type of crime requires a great deal of attention from the police, for which a town may not have the funding or the resources to spare.

### **Children are at Risk**

Hundreds of children are neglected every year after living with parents who are methamphetamine "cooks." Children who reside in or near methamphetamine labs are at a great risk of being harmed in such a toxic environment, due to the noxious fumes which can cause brain damage and the explosive elements that go into making the drug.

Cooking methamphetamine is extremely dangerous, and labs often catch on fire and explode. A child living inside could overdose from methamphetamine left out by parents, suffer from attachment disorders or behavioural problems, be malnourished, physically or sexually abused and/or burned or fatally injured from a fire or explosion.



## **Orphaned Children**

Nationally, the number of foster care children has been rising rapidly in states that have been hit hard by methamphetamine. Children are taken from their parents who may have been using or making methamphetamine, and placed in foster homes, crowding an already overflowing system which has limited resources.

It may become increasingly difficult to attract foster parents for these children because they often have many behaviour problems. For example, they can't sleep at night since they are used to sleeping on a floor and they often have not been toilet trained due to the neglectful nature of their upbringing.

## **Hepatitis, HIV, AIDS**

While using methamphetamine, users can feel hypersexual and uninhibited, often forgetting to use protection. Since methamphetamine can be administered intravenously, some users share dirty needles. These acts can lead to the transmission of serious and deadly diseases, such as hepatitis, HIV and AIDS.

## **Hospitals and Burn Units**

Methamphetamine production is a dangerous and illegal business that can take place in living spaces - from kitchens to basements to hotel rooms to cars. The materials that are used to produce the drug are toxic and often flammable and any mistakes can result in an explosion or injury not only to the methamphetamine "cook", but their families as well. These chemical burns are tough to treat and are extremely expensive. Care in these specialized units may be uncompensated, placing a great financial strain on hospitals and state medical programs.

## **Treatment**

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive drug and requires intense, long-term treatment. Sometimes addicts don't live long enough to complete treatment. Recovery often consists of frequent backsliding into methamphetamine use. Treatment costs may be uncompensated and can place a huge burden on the state's medical program.



### **National Ice Taskforce Final Report 2015:**

Our first priority must be supporting families, workers and communities to better respond to people affected by ice. Families, frontline workers and communities are struggling to respond to the growing number of dependent ice users around the country. Our immediate priority must be to support those Australians who are most affected by ice use. Families need advice on how to help their relatives who are struggling as a consequence of their ice use. Frontline workers need guidance on how to engage with ice users, and those in crisis, in particular where aggressive behaviour or violence is present.

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