

ICE
REGIONAL
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

Townsville Ice Roundtable

Outcomes Report

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Queensland Government

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Queensland
Government

Introduction

On 17 May 2017, the Queensland Premier and Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, hosted the Townsville Ice Roundtable. The purpose of the roundtable was to gain a better understanding of the impact of crystal methamphetamine (ice) in the region, and identify issues and solutions to improve Government responses. The Townsville Ice Roundtable was the first in a series of regional roundtables to be held across the State.

This roundtable followed the Ice Regional Community Engagement Summit, held in Rockhampton on 27 April 2017. The summit brought together more than 150 delegates from across regional Queensland to seek their views on the impacts of ice in regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland.

Feedback and ideas from the summit and regional roundtables will inform the finalisation of [Action on ice](#) – the Government's draft plan to tackle ice use in Queensland.

As a result of this community consultation, the Government has announced an interim response to address the immediate needs of families and communities across the State. As part of the 2017–18 Queensland Budget, an additional \$18 million will be contributed to *Action on Ice* with measures to increase awareness, support families and better equip our frontline service providers to respond to ice use and harms in Queensland.

This is an addition to the Government's investment of \$43 million over five years under *Connecting Care to Recovery 2016-2021* to increase specialist alcohol and other drug services and \$6 million to establish new and enhance existing Drug and Alcohol Brief Intervention Teams and additional specialist alcohol and other drug treatment clinicians across six Hospital and Health Services.

The draft plan informs Queenslanders about ice and its impacts on the individual, families, frontline service providers and the community. It places ice within the broader context of responding to alcohol and other drugs and has a focus on:

- reducing supply, primarily through law enforcement activity
- reducing demand, through prevention, early intervention and treatment, and
- minimising harm, through specialised programs, services and initiatives.

The Townsville Ice Roundtable, the Rockhampton Ice Summit and the other regional roundtables are part of a broad community engagement process to understand specific community needs, particularly in regional and rural Queensland. Written comments are also sought on the draft plan until 31 October 2017, which can be accessed at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au. The Government anticipates the *Action on ice* draft plan will be finalised later this year.



Roundtable overview

The Honourable Coralee O'Rourke MP, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, welcomed participants to the Townsville Ice Roundtable, identifying ice as an issue of major concern in the Townsville community.

Minister O'Rourke reiterated the importance of the roundtable being hosted in Townsville and encouraged the participants to develop workable, effective community-led solutions.

The Premier formally opened the roundtable and acknowledged that the issue of ice needed to come out from behind closed doors. The Premier recognised that ice was having a significant impact on our communities, particularly those in rural and regional Queensland.

Approximately 45 people from the local Townsville community attended the roundtable, representing frontline emergency service workers, health professionals, policy officers, community members and family members with lived experience of ice and other substance misuse. Stakeholders worked together through small group sessions to identify potential solutions to respond to issues associated with ice in the Townsville region.

Local members Scott Stewart MP, Member for Townsville, and Aaron Harper MP, Member for Thuringowa, provided their insights into how ice was impacting their local community. Aaron Harper MP highlighted the need to develop local solutions for local problems, while Scott Stewart MP thanked participants for their contribution to shape strategies to address ice and encouraged community members to share their views on the Government's draft plan, *Action on ice*.

'This requires a whole-of-community response – the input from a range of people here today across the depth and breadth of the Townsville community has enabled us to identify a number of strategies relevant to our community'

Scott Stewart MP

Guest speaker

Cameron Francis, Principal Consultant at Dovetail, Queensland Health provided information about ice and its impacts including:

- as the level of purity in methamphetamine increases (such as in ice) the adverse impact on people who use can be exacerbated, including the risk of experiencing psychosis
- because ice is often smoked, it can be easier to initiate use, and ice use is also highly reinforcing,
- traditional treatment approaches are effective but treatment service models need to be flexible to meet the specific needs of people who use ice, such as longer periods of withdrawal and recovery.



Themed discussions

Following the context setting provided by Cameron Francis, participants were then broken into five smaller groups as outlined below:

- **Health perspectives: Prevention and Early Intervention** facilitated by Ms Helen Taylor, Acting Director, Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch, Queensland Health
- **Health perspectives: Treatment for people who use ice** facilitated by Ms Cassie Davis, Psychologist, Dovetail, Queensland Health
- **Supporting Indigenous Communities** facilitated by Ms Sandra Crosato-Matters, Manager, Townsville Service Centre, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- **Supporting Families and Communities** facilitated by Ms Sandra Moore, Regional Executive Director, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- **Criminal Justice Responses** facilitated by Inspector Rhys Wildman, Manager, Drug and Alcohol Coordination Unit, Queensland Police Service

Before the discussions commenced, participants were asked to share how they contributed to the collective effort to respond to ice use and harms in Queensland. During the sessions, acknowledging the range of experience and perspectives of roundtable participants, meaningful dialogue was facilitated between government and non-government service providers and those with lived experience of substance misuse, to identify key issues and brainstorm possible practical solutions relevant to their themed area.

From these discussions, the key issues that were identified across each of the groups included:

- impact of stigma associated with ice use
- limited flexible treatment options available
- impact on families and communities
- effect of organised crime in the ice market.

A number of potential solutions to address the issues were identified by the themed groups. Groups were encouraged to identify their top solutions.

The top solutions from the **Health perspectives – Prevention and Early Intervention** discussion were:

- public health information awareness campaign focused on ice and alcohol and other drugs supported by targeted strategies to support workforces and priority population groups
- enhanced integration of services across the treatment spectrum.



The top solutions from the **Health perspectives – Treatment for people who use ice** discussion were:

- specialist alcohol and other drug education and training for General Practitioners to assist with early intervention and referral to specialist treatment
- targeted residential facilities for women and children; and review of residential rehabilitation funding models
- lowering the threshold of child safety interventions to decrease long term impact on children exposed to domestic violence, substance misuse and neglect.

The top solutions from the **Supporting Indigenous Communities** discussion were:

- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth forum to discuss issues impacting Indigenous young people, including ice
- high-profile role modelling activities, for example, a local Townsville sportsperson
- flexible and culturally appropriate rehabilitation treatment options.

The top solutions from **Supporting Families and Communities** discussion were:

- community-led action group, which includes representatives from the community, government and non-government sectors, that aims to develop tools and strategies to reduce the harms associated with ice use in the community – a similar approach to the Geelong Initiative
- increased access to withdrawal management and rehabilitation in regional and remote Queensland supported by a telephone hotline number to connect families to support, information and training
- legislation that mandates treatment/detox similar to the Victorian Severe Substance Dependence Treatment Act (that does involve detention/treatment under mental health legislation).

The top solutions from **Criminal Justice Responses** were:

- early education – exploring the possibility of intelligence-led education programs across the state, targeting at risk areas by utilising the analysis from the waste water report. Education needs to start earlier than high school given anecdotal evidence that children as young as 10 are using
- additional focus on flexible treatment options – the reinstatement of the Drug Court was supported as a way to ensure this. However, interventions are also needed to address the importance of support for people post detox/rehabilitation
- greater emphasis on addressing organised crime's involvement in the illicit market for ice – targeting state, national and international organised crime syndicates. Strategies needed to include illicit markets for all drugs not just methamphetamine, noting some other drugs were sold to pay for methamphetamine stock.



Following the report back to the plenary on the solutions identified, participants were able to vote on their top priorities. The solutions that received the most support across all of the groups were:

- increased access to treatment services, particularly withdrawal management and rehabilitation, with a focus on flexible and culturally appropriate services and services for families
- information and awareness through education programs in schools and targeted population campaigns.

'We want to see our solutions become a reality and to be able to provide support to the families impacted by ice' Townsville community member

Lived experience session

Following the roundtable discussion, the Premier hosted a private closed session with participants with lived experience of substance misuse, including ice, from the Townsville region. The courage and bravery of those with a lived experience was evident as they shared their stories with the Premier. Attendees not only shared their stories but also identified a number of solutions to address the impact of ice in the Townsville region community.

Conclusion

The Townsville Ice Roundtable enabled the engagement of representatives from the community and across service sectors to further consider and understand the impact that ice is having on the local community. Participants were able to provide their views on how to better implement current initiatives in the Townsville region, as well as identifying additional initiatives to ensure effective local responses. Together, participants identified a range of potentially workable, effective, community-led solutions that could assist the Townsville community to respond to use and harms of ice.

This Townsville Ice Roundtable is part of a series of community consultations across Queensland. Before finalising *Action on ice* later this year, the Government will continue to seek feedback from other communities across Queensland.

The feedback received has confirmed the view that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to addressing the impacts of ice in Queensland. Stakeholders also confirmed that governments cannot address these issues on their own, and that responding effectively to ice use and harms requires the integrated and combined efforts of many agencies across communities including service providers, community groups, workplaces, families and individuals.



Let's keep the conversation going

In addition to participation at the roundtable, the community is encouraged to participate in the discussion by submitting ideas on how the Government can address the harms caused by ice:

- have your say on the *Action on ice* draft plan until 31 October 2017 at <https://getinvolved.qld.gov.au/gi/consultation/3602/view.html>
- stay up to date by following the Queensland Government on Facebook at facebook.com/QueenslandGovernment
- for more information on what the Government is doing to address ice, search 'Action on ice' on medium.com.

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