Joint Statement

NSW Government delay on Ice Inquiry recommendations is costing lives: COVID-19 makes comprehensive strategy to tackle addiction issues more urgent

October 7, 2021

An alliance of peak health bodies including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and its Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) NSW, are calling on the NSW Government to stop delaying its response to the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the drug ‘Ice’.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made dealing with addiction issues even more urgent, with evidence of increasing use of alcohol and other drugs in the community. However, treatment services for people remain significantly underfunded, and estimated to only meet the need of fewer than half those seeking help.

The alliance says the government must develop and implement, as a matter of priority, a whole-of-government evidence-based strategy to address the harms caused by alcohol and other drugs.

Long term policy failures relating to drugs are costing lives and damaging communities right now. It does not have to be this way. NSW has in the past led the way in treatment and harm minimisation responses - and can do so again if it implements the recommendations of the Special Commission’s final report within a comprehensive alcohol and other drugs strategy.

It is now more than 18 months ago that Commissioner Dan Howard handed the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine and other amphetamine type stimulants to the NSW Government. This report is a comprehensive, evidence-based document that resulted from large scale consultation with all stakeholders across NSW including experts in the field, service providers, persons with lived experience, community members and many others. The Inquiry received over 250 submissions.

The recommendations from the Special Commission outline a clear way forward to address drug use effectively and minimise harms by treating addiction as a health and social issue.

The RACP, RACGP, RANZCP and AMA NSW call on the NSW Government to urgently:

- Respond to the Ice Inquiry recommendations
- Develop an evidence-based whole-of-government alcohol and other drugs policy and a Drug Action Plan as recommended in the Commission’s Report, in consultation with experts in addiction medicine, general practitioners and other relevant health practitioners.
- Significantly increase funding of evidence-based alcohol and other drugs services so that everyone seeking treatment can get it.
- Ensure personal addiction issues are treated as health and social issues, not as criminal ones.

Media contact: Amelia Brock, 0430 187 161