



MEDIA RELEASE

ICE USERS NOT GETTING THE TREATMENT THEY NEED

The Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association (ATCA) today called for more treatment options for methamphetamine or ICE users. This follows the release of the position paper on methamphetamines, developed by the Australian Medical Association (AMA).

Ms Janice Jones, Executive Officer of the ATCA, said today that the ATCA supports the position paper on methamphetamines released by the AMA and is calling for a review of how the health system deals with this very difficult drug problem.

Therapeutic Communities (TCs) in Australia & New Zealand have been successfully treating amphetamine dependence for over 30 years, and recognise the need to respond differently and strategically to the problems faced by ICE users seeking help. The increase in aggressive behaviours amongst ICE users, often leading to psychosis, can create chaos and disruption for treatment providers.

Ms Jones said today, “We need strategic planning and targeted responses to avoid any reactions that may result in scarce funds being inadvertently misdirected”.

The ATCA also supports the recommendations made by the AMA in calling for all emergency departments to have a specialist drugs liaison officer to engage and support methamphetamine and other drug users.

However, Ms Jones added, “These workers also need to be trained in the range of mental health conditions that ICE users can present with. They also need to be aware of what services are out there that are experienced in treating the complex needs of these people.

Therapeutic communities deal very well with clients with complex and problematic behaviours which often result from polydrug use, including ICE.

“Working with clients with a comorbidity of mental health and substance use disorders is now the expectation, rather than the exception. At least 70% of clients undertaking treatment for drug addiction also suffer from mental health issues. Likewise, a similar number of clients with a presenting mental health problem will have a co-occurring substance use disorder. This is our area of expertise but we need an increase in beds and qualified staff to cope with this disturbing trend”, Ms Jones said.

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