Dear Supporters,

ACTION:

1. Email Tony Abbott and congratulate and thank him for setting up the National Ice Taskforce to tackle the scourge of ice use in Australian communities. You can click here to email Mr Abbott.
2. Email the leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, to thank and congratulate him for bi-partisan support for the National Ice Taskforce. You can click here to email Mr Shorten.
3. If you live in NSW email the Premier Mr Baird and thank and congratulate him for his commitment to deal with the ice problem. You can click here to email Mr Baird.
4. If you live in Victoria email the Premier Mr Andrews and congratulate for his commitment to deal with the ice problem evidenced by his government's Ice Action Plan. You can click here to email Mr Andrews.

Ask for a "don't use ice" education campaign to reduce demand, not a failed substitute drug program as such programs have not been shown to be effective in helping users to overcome their addiction.

Feedback on any responses received would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Gabrielle Walsh

Secretary DACA

Background brief

In April Tony Abbott announced the launching of a national taskforce to help tackle the "growing and deadly scourge" of crystal methamphetamine, otherwise known as ice – see http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/health/tony-abbott-to-launch-new-ice-taskforce/story-fn59nokw-1227295048932 . The statistics on ice use are 200,000 Australians using each year and 25% of them using as often as once a week. NSW police statistics show a 25% increase in ice-related arrests and detections over the last two years. The Australian Drug Foundation said that while the use of amphetamines has remained steady at 2 per cent of the population, the proportion using ice, the highly potent and addictive crystal form, has skyrocketed.

Mr Abbott secured bipartisan support from Opposition leader Bill Shorten for a National Ice Taskforce, to be headed by former Victorian police commissioner Ken Lay. The taskforce will examine all existing efforts to address ice and identify ways to take a systematic, comprehensive and coordinated approach to education, health and law enforcement. An interim report is to be delivered to the Prime Minister by the middle of this year.

The move has of course been criticised by those who push harm minimisation and who want the taskforce to look at "regulation" of ice which could include "ice rooms" similar to the heroin injecting rooms in Sydney's Kings Cross, making substitute drugs available to ice addicts.

However it is a hopeful sign that the Taskforce has bi-partisan support, that commitments have been made by NSW Premier Mike Baird to help stop ice infiltrating the nation, and that Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has announced an Ice Action Plan. It's going to take all levels of government to work together with health departments, rehabilitation facilities and not-for-profit groups to stop the manufacture and sale of the drug and help addicts get off it.

Information on ice:

- For reports of the serious effects of ice on users and emergency workers and ordinary people in the community see - http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-25/drug-ice-fuelling-violent-crime-funding-gangs-acc-report/6346594 .
- From an Australian government website "DRUGS The real facts: "Ice is one of the worst drugs out there. In terms of social impact, access to the drug becomes the prevalent, overriding priority for any ice addict, and they often become aggressive and violent, alienating their families and friends." (see http://www.drugs.health.gov.au/internet/drugs/publishing.nsf/content/campaign/$file/bkFact.pdf)
- A short film on the devastating effects of Ice use. Be warned there are graphic descriptions that may be disturbing to some people - http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-worlds-most-dangerous-drug/ .

DRUG ADVISORY COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA'S COMMENTS ON ICE-

- As with other illicit drugs, amphetamines are attracting increasing imports and local production because of the **high demand in Australia**.
- This high demand is **providing incentives for organized criminal groups to provide speed**.
- **Early intervention rehabilitation is needed** to eliminate the health damage of users.
- Amphetamine **use causes brain damage, violence, heart problems, stroke, psychosis and addiction**.
- An **intensive drug demand reduction campaign with a diversion of identified speed users into rehabilitation will prevent further harm** to users and also assist in reducing health costs to Australian authorities.
- A drug **demand reduction campaign will also assist** Australian border protection agencies **to combat the increasing importation of speed**.