

METHAMPHETAMINES

**565. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Police:**

Can the minister please inform the house about what this government is doing to counter the supply of methamphetamine in our community?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:**

I thank the member for Forrestfield for this question on a drug that is of great concern to the people of Western Australia—a drug that is wreaking havoc and tearing apart lives in our community. I appreciate the member for Forrestfield's interest in what police are doing about the supply end of the methamphetamine issue in our community. Obviously, my colleague in the other place Minister Helen Morton is dealing with the demand end of the methamphetamine issues facing our community.

Police and the government have been working on a methamphetamine enforcement plan. We announced the start of that action plan, which is a multi-pronged approach, just the other day. In this space, within WA Police's organised crime unit there is now a methamphetamine task force. This will comprise approximately 35 officers who are being sourced as part of the government's growth program to provide an additional 550 police and auxiliary officers. Those police officers will be tasked with getting the information from a special meth action desk. All of the information coming in to police about methamphetamine distribution in Western Australia will be funnelled through that methamphetamine task force desk. Out of that, police will build intelligence and put together particular targeted operations specifically looking at the transit routes for methamphetamine in the community. We are looking at how methamphetamine is getting into Western Australia, how it is being transported around the state and how it is being distributed in our suburbs. The ultimate goal of that team of 35 officers in the methamphetamine task force is to seize methamphetamine, arrest those people responsible and ensure that they are targeting the transit hubs.

In addition to that, our Joint Organised Crime Task Force is working with our federal colleagues, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, and Australian Customs and border control. All government agencies across commonwealth and state jurisdictions are working together through that joint task force. Only last week they seized and removed 20 kilograms of methamphetamine that would have been distributed into our community. As a result, two people are presently facing charges of possession with intent to sell or supply. Through the Joint Organised Crime Task Force, and WA Police, we are looking at seizing assets and money and putting that back into our methamphetamine action plan, amongst other things. As methamphetamine is an illegal drug, people under-report their usage of it. The best tool that we have is to inquire of the community about the level of methamphetamine use. The results of those surveys are quite alarming. Methamphetamine use in the WA community is at 3.8 per cent of the population whereas across the country it sits at around 2.1 per cent.

We are also starting a trial. We have copied South Australia and Victoria in having a look at sampling our wastewater treatment plants so that we can understand the level of methamphetamine use in our community. We will test three wastewater treatment plants for metabolites—the by-product of methamphetamine consumption in humans. Out of testing for the amount of metabolites in our wastewater treatment plants we will have a better understanding of the level of meth use in our community and about what else we need to do as a government.

We are driving this program hard and fast with WA Police. Just as in the 1990s when we had a problem with heroin on our streets—heroin was flooding the streets and there was an unprecedented surge in heroin use in this state—police are now putting all of their intelligence and effort into targeting methamphetamine use. We will keep the pressure on to drive down usage and distribution of methamphetamine in our community.