

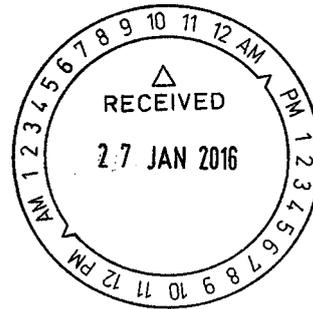
# Hon Dave Grills MLC

Member for Mining & Pastoral Region

Ref: Petition No. 105

18 January 2016

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee  
Environmental and Public Affairs  
GPO Box A11  
Perth WA 6837



Dear Mr O'Brien

## Submission in support of Petition No. 105 – Esperance Hospital Support Services

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for considering this important matter.

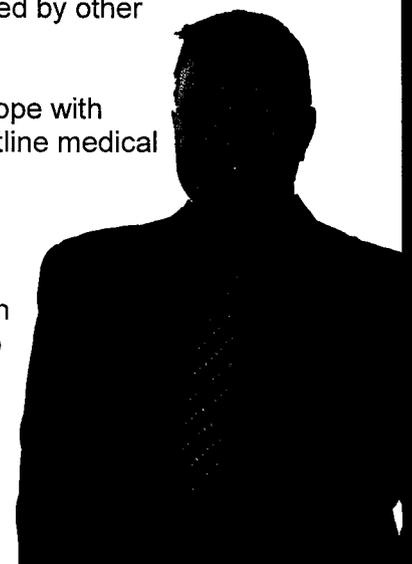
Since being elected as Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region in 2013, a number of constituents in the Esperance region have raised concerns about the apparent growing prevalence of methamphetamine - commonly known as 'ice' - in the community.

Methamphetamine use is a mounting problem across the country, with the situation particularly acute in Western Australia. The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that Western Australia had the highest methamphetamine use with 3.8 percent of the population over 14-years-old having used the drug compared to the national average of 2.1 percent.

According to the 2015 Final Report of the National Ice Taskforce, there is emerging evidence that methamphetamine is becoming an increasing problem in regional and remote communities across Australia. The Taskforce found that the proportion of people using methamphetamine in outer regional areas more than doubled between 2010 and 2013. During its community consultations, the Taskforce heard that a wide variety of social support services, including services in many regional areas, are reporting that methamphetamine is having a marked impact on service demand

Methamphetamine harms not only users but also families and entire communities in a number of ways. As the 2015 Final Report of the National Ice Taskforce notes, methamphetamine use can trigger psychological disturbances or violent and aggressive behaviour. Long term use may damage the brain and cause impaired attention, memory and motor skills. According to the report: "The distress ice causes for individuals, families, communities and frontline workers is disproportionate to that caused by other drugs."

The Taskforce notes that regional communities are struggling to cope with methamphetamine use as support services are often limited. Frontline medical and emergency services are often stretched, with police, ambulance and hospital workers facing difficulties in effectively managing users. This places staff in dangerous and unpredictable situations and diverts resources away from other areas. Looking more widely, methamphetamine use also has a negative impact on the community's economic output and social fabric and is linked to



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higher rates of crime and violence. The cost to government and our wider economy and society is significant.

Esperance is one regional community where the methamphetamine problem appears to be worsening. The issue is further exacerbated by the town's isolation. Esperance is a remote community located some 400 kilometres away from the nearest major centre. As the town lacks dedicated detoxification facilities, those seeking treatment for methamphetamine addiction have few options other than to travel long distances to access appropriate services. This is costly and can reduce the likelihood of recovery as patients lack the necessary social support structure.

A number of general practitioners, medical professionals and community service groups in the Esperance region have expressed their support for improved mental health and alcohol and drug services in the town, namely a local detoxification unit. Such a unit would provide one-on-one nursing supervision, appropriate medical supervision and the coordination of follow-up mental health services for patients.

Calls for a local detoxification unit to assist in the treatment of methamphetamine addiction have also been supported by the Shire of Esperance, the Esperance Chamber of Commerce and Industry and members of the general community, as evidenced by this petition. I have attached support letters from various locals groups and medical professionals for your consideration. I have also included a copy of the submission provided by the principal petitioner, Ms Deleine Congreve.

Based on my discussions with constituents, I believe there is a strong need to expand mental health and alcohol and drug treatment services in Esperance in order to help tackle the methamphetamine problem. A detoxification unit, combined with early intervention and prevention measures, would assist those struggling with addiction and improve community wellbeing.

I thank you for your interest and look forward to your response. This matter has not been referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

Yours sincerely



**HON DAVE GRILLS MLC**  
**MEMBER FOR THE MINING AND PASTORAL REGION**

