

## Action on Ice – community consultation summary

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### Introduction

From February to October 2017, the Queensland Government engaged with the community to seek input and insights from all Queenslanders on the draft *Action on Ice* plan, and to better understand the impacts of crystal methamphetamine (ice), particularly in rural, remote and regional communities.

A number of methods were used to facilitate the community consultation process, including:

- an Ice Regional Community Engagement Summit in Rockhampton
- smaller community roundtables in Moreton Bay, Logan and Townsville; and
- a call for written submissions on the draft *Action on Ice* plan.

More than 400 individuals provided feedback through these consultation forums. High-level outcomes of the consultation process showed that there was broad support for the vision and purpose of the *Action on Ice* plan. General themes that emerged from the summit, roundtables and written submissions, and have informed the finalisation of the *Action on Ice* plan, include:

- improved community awareness on the symptoms and impacts of Ice use; and a reliable and trusted information source on how to support people affected by Ice and other substances, and how and where to access help
- enhanced access to, and increased funding for, effective, flexible and culturally appropriate treatment, recovery and support services for individuals and families
- changes to the criminal justice system, including the decriminalisation of Ice use, tougher penalties for Ice suppliers, and diversion options for persons charged with Ice-related offences
- greater need for the availability and accessibility of culturally appropriate responses.

Overall, the community engagement program has demonstrated there is strong support for a collaborative approach to address the impacts on Ice use on Queenslanders, their families and communities. Queenslanders have indicated that a plan to reduce supply, demand and harm from Ice should also sit within a broader context of responding to alcohol and other drugs, and should also recognise the unique needs of communities in regional and rural Queensland.

A summary of the outcomes from each of the consultation forums is provided below.

### Rockhampton Ice Regional Community Engagement Summit

On 27 April 2017, the Queensland Premier and Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, hosted the Ice Regional Community Engagement Summit in Rockhampton (the summit). The summit was convened to better understand the impacts of ice, particularly in rural, regional and remote communities.

Around 150 persons attended the summit, including service providers, community leaders and members of the public. The Premier was also joined by the Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services; the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Minister for Communities, Women and Youth and Minister for Child Safety; and the Honourable Bill Byrne MP, Member for Rockhampton and Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Economic Development. The Member for Keppel, Brittany Lauga MP also attended. Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, Shadow Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, represented the Opposition. Mayors and councillors from the Livingstone Shire Council and Rockhampton Regional Council also attended.

The summit involved keynote speeches from workers on the frontline; a panel discussion and question and answer session; concurrent workshop sessions; and a smaller evening session exclusively for local community members with a lived experience of substance use including Ice.

During the sessions, emphasis was placed on identifying what is currently working to address Ice use, what could be improved, what gaps are evident, and how the Queensland Government can better support local community-led initiatives to respond to the issue.

General themes that emerged from the summit included a need for:

- better information about how and where to access help
- information and education, including culturally appropriate, about Ice and its impacts
- better information sharing between agencies
- ensuring clients are directed to the appropriate service and/or program
- flexible and accessible service responses, particularly in regional areas
- family inclusive practices across services sectors
- enhanced access to culturally appropriate community support services
- decriminalisation of Ice use.

An Outcomes Report on the summit was subsequently prepared and released on the Ice Regional Community Engagement website via <http://qld.gov.au/actiononice>.

## Ice roundtables

On 17 May 2017, the Queensland Premier and Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, hosted the Townsville Ice Roundtable (the Townsville roundtable). Local representatives discussed how to best implement current Ice initiatives in Townsville, as well as identify any additional initiatives required to ensure an effective response to combat Ice.

The Townsville roundtable was followed by the Moreton Bay Ice Summit, held on 14 July 2017 and co-hosted by the Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills and the Honourable Mark Ryan MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. The Moreton Bay summit had a particular focus on youth justice, and understanding the impacts of Ice on young people and their families in the region.

The Logan Ice Roundtable was held on 6 October 2017 and hosted by the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Minister for Communities, Women and Youth and Minister for Child Safety, and supported by the Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. This forum explored the relationship between problematic Ice use and child protection in the Logan region.

Like the Rockhampton summit, the Townsville, Moreton Bay and Logan roundtables were designed to gain a better understanding of the impact of crystal methamphetamine (ice) in the region, and identify issues and solutions to improve Government responses. A number of solutions were suggested consistently across each of the consultation forums:

- increased access to treatment services, particularly withdrawal management and rehabilitation, with a focus on flexible and culturally appropriate services and services for families
- information and awareness through education programs in schools; and campaigns to increase awareness of support services
- expansion of cautioning, diversion and referral options for Ice users

- establishment of an holistic, multi-disciplinary, youth and culturally appropriate service to provide therapeutic responses to people experiencing substance use and their families
- opportunities for families to be empowered to develop their own strategies for self-protection and support through the development of family-led focussed support groups and community based family events.

An Outcomes Report has been published for each of the roundtables, documenting the issues and solutions raised by delegates at each forum, via <http://qld.gov.au/actiononice>.

## Written submissions

In February 2017, the Queensland Government called for written submissions on the draft *Action on Ice* plan from members of the community with a focus on the following key questions:

1. How effective are the implementation arrangements for existing initiatives outlined in the draft plan?
2. How can government better support community-led initiatives to tackle Ice?
3. Are there any gaps in the draft *Action on Ice* plan?

Submissions closed on 31 October 2017. A total of 62 submissions were received from service providers and members of the community. General themes that emerged from the written submissions included the need for:

- changes to the criminal justice system, including increased penalties for suppliers, an increased focus on rehabilitation as a principle of sentencing, and diversion options such as treatment before sentencing
- increased access to, and funding for, effective and flexible treatment, particularly residential rehabilitation
- increased access to recovery services, such as support groups and transitional programs
- individualised and culturally appropriate approaches to treatment and recovery
- improved community awareness on the signs and symptoms of Ice use, and how to respond to and support people affected by Ice use, particularly for friends, families, frontline staff and service providers.

## Initial action taken to respond to community feedback

As an immediate response to the feedback received from the community engagement process, the Queensland Government committed an additional \$18 million over four years in the 2017–18 Budget to address the urgent needs of families and communities across the State as part of the Government's efforts to tackle the harmful use of Ice in Queensland. The package will help increase community awareness, further support families affected by Ice use, and better equip frontline service providers to respond to and support Ice users. This is in addition to the \$43 million provided for additional services funded under *Connecting Care to Recovery 2016-2021*.

## Finalising the Government's *Action on Ice*

The Government proposes to publish the final *Action on Ice* plan once the community feedback has properly been considered by Government. The final plan will include implementation arrangements for the Government's election commitment to provide \$14.3 million over three years for a 42-bed residential drug rehabilitation and treatment facility in Rockhampton.