

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

Attachment 6

RESPONSE TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Drugs of Dependence Committee

30 July 2021

Asked by **MR PETER CAIN MLA (CHAIR)** –

You referred to the war on drugs and there is an assumption that it has failed. I do not think anyone has not said that in all the hearings. But I wonder about tackling supply. We are keeping the actual supplying and trafficking criminalised and I wonder whether tackling that might also be an important part of your harm reduction program, which obviously touches on resources. I do not know if that is within scope along with this legislative change.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The ACT Government is committed to investing in evidence-based and practice informed harm minimisation responses to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, in line with the Australian national harm minimisation approach to drugs, and to leading the country in innovative policy approaches.

Supply reduction is one of the three pillars of harm minimisation in the *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026* and the *ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021* (ACT Action Plan) with the other two pillars being harm reduction and demand reduction. Under the supply reduction pillar, the ACT Action Plan contains multiple actions to prevent, stop, disrupt or reduce production and supply of illicit drugs, which aligns with the works being undertaken by ACT Policing.

With resources firmly directed towards sellers, marketers, commercial growers and distributors who profit from the importation, production and distribution of illegal drugs in our community. ACT Policing recognises that the personal use of substances is very rarely criminalised in isolation.

ACT Policing will continue to work closely with its interstate police partners, as well as National Australian Federal Police and Commonwealth colleagues, to target its efforts to disrupting the drug supply chains into the ACT.



Law enforcements' focus continues to be on disrupting the supply chains to cut off a portion of the supply, noting the impossibility of cutting off the total supply. Whilst some cases, such as Operation Ironside, have been able to reduce the supply, it is evident that more of a focus needs to be placed on addressing the underlying issues that drive both organised crime and illicit drug use in order to be effective.

In addition to actions to reduce harm from drugs through supply side actions, the ACT Action Plan also includes actions to control, manage and/or regulate the supply of legal drugs. In 2019, the ACT Government implemented the DAPIS Online Remote Access (DORA) real time prescription monitoring platform for health practitioners to reduce pharmaceutical related harms including deaths in the community. The system includes real-time prescription dispensing information for ACT patients including from interstate pharmacies.

The ACT Government is also working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to implement the national Real Time Prescription Monitoring system. The ACT's version of the national system is called Canberra Script and is planned to be made available for early adopter pilot sites from November 2021 before its rollout to all eligible health practitioners in early 2022.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health

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