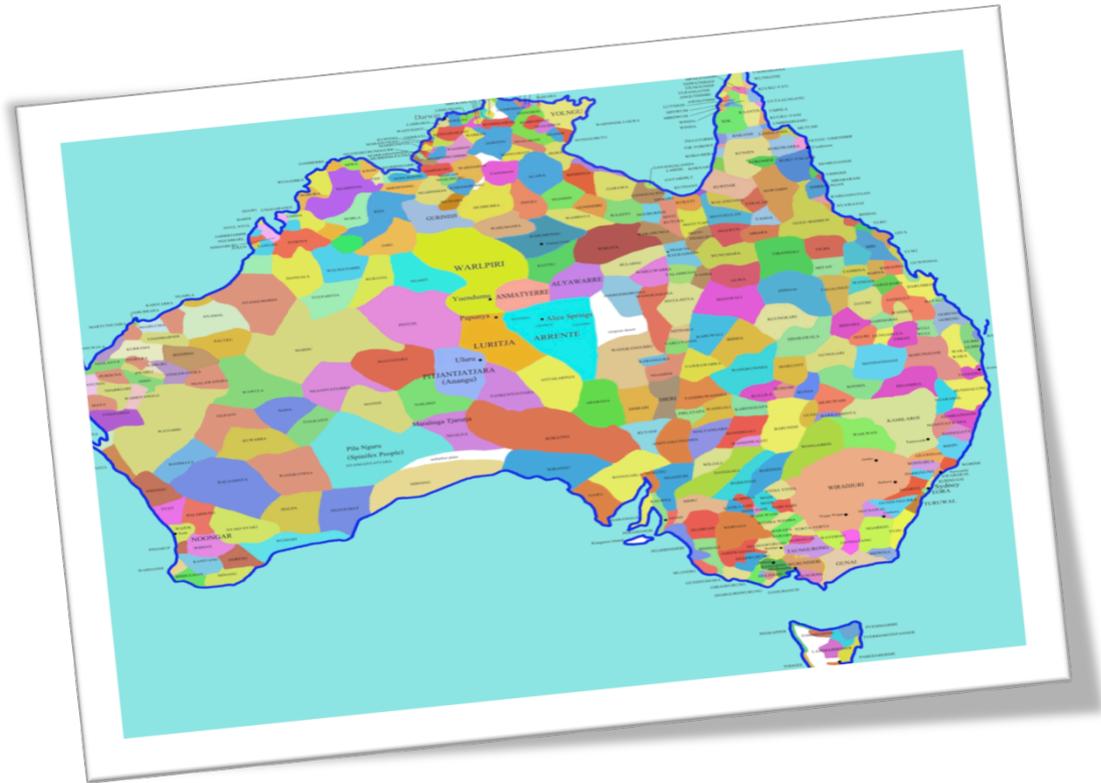


Supporting families impacted by methamphetamine use

Kim Cartwright & Eddie Fewings

Acknowledgement to the Kurna People



Background

Methamphetamine use is a growing concern.

The National Ice Taskforce was established in April 2015 to drive solutions at the state and territory level.

This led to the commissioning of a study on the public costs of methamphetamine use earlier this year. These costs were to be calculated using national data sets.

Rural and remote component of the study

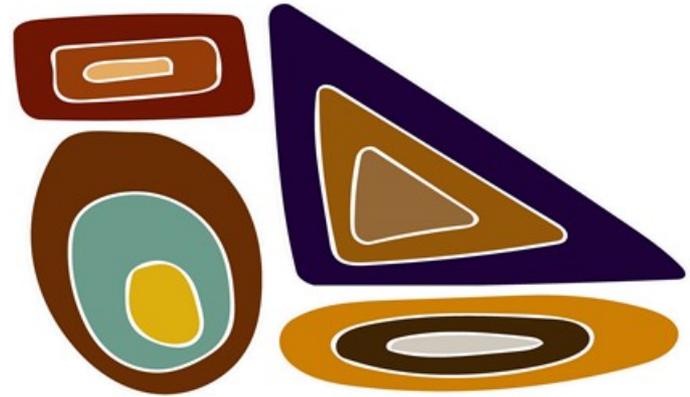
Rural and remote areas are under-represented in the national data sets.

This led to the commissioning of a smaller qualitative study focusing on costs in two areas:

- 1. a rural town in South Australia**
- 2. a regional centre that services remote communities in the Northern Territory**

Aim of the study

To identify the costs of methamphetamine use in rural and remote areas that are not captured in national data



Artwork by Michelle Bovill

Methodology

- **Focus: Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal people.**
- **Interviewed 27 representative across a wide range of service providers**
- **Ethical clearance granted by Curtin University and in both jurisdictions.**
- **Cannot generalise the findings to all rural and remote communities but there are commonalities across sites**

Sample population

Who is included

- **Service providers who come into regular contact with AOD users, including methamphetamine users at the two sites**
- **Clients may be Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people or both**

Who is not included

- **Families of methamphetamine users**
- **Methamphetamine users themselves**

Focus of today's talk

Aboriginal people who are affected by methamphetamine use (users, their families, their communities)

as perceived by service providers who come into regular contact with Aboriginal users at the two study locations

Findings

Varying reports about prevalence

“It’s a big problem for a very small number of people in the Aboriginal community. We’re really only aware of about 5 people in the community.”

Others say that: meth use among Aboriginal people is widespread, even youth are using it, and it may have entered dry remote communities

Putting meth use and its harms in context

Consensus was that meth use was much less than alcohol use by a large margin

“ They said at the hospital they probably have three people with some drug induced psychosis and this sort of behaviour (in a month) compared to hundreds with alcohol (misuse).”

An ice epidemic – fact or fiction?

Crystal methamphetamine use is a new phenomenon with the *potential* to cause widespread harm.

Negative TV ads created fear in the communities (68%) and led people to believe the problem was bigger than it was: *“Everyone is using it.”*



The Montana Meth Project/
Colorado Meth Project
www.methproject.org

Differing perspectives

Focus of government is financial costs

Focus on the ground is the social and personal costs

Harms reported by our participants

- **Children get less and disturbed sleep**
- **At risk of physical and emotional harm**
- **May feel unsafe and reluctant to go home**
- **Distress from unpredictable behaviours and violence**
- **Household financial costs**
- **Impact of criminalisation**

Context of coping

- **Lack of AOD treatment services**

Those that are available may be costly or culturally unsafe

- **Fear of official intervention (police, child protection)**

Coping strategies

- **Practise tolerance**
- **Families take turns housing the user(s)**
- **Share child care responsibilities**
- **Finance the habit (directly or indirectly)**

Emerging solutions



Current Strategy

- ***AOD-OUR-WAY* builds capacity in frontline staff = capacity in services, communities and families.**
 - **Dual Diagnosis/Brief Intervention training for SEWB workforce**
 - **Resource Development (clinical flowchart, information)**
 - **QAIHC ½ Day Crystal Clear – frontline staff training**

Other strategies (families, friends, communities)

Education, Awareness and Training

- What is Ice, How it affects the mind and body
- What might be the signs, What can you do, Where can you go for help, What will happen if..., Who can help you navigate.

Critical Incident support

- What just happened, Where are they now, Are they OK, What will happen now, Who can help navigate.

Medium and Long Term Support

- Understanding treatment, Lapse and relapse; Post treatment support