

**The ICE Epidemic:  
Addressing Drug Addiction in  
Australia**

**A White Paper**

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## 1. Introduction / Background

Illicit use of drugs is a direct cause of death and disability as well as being a risk factor for a number of diseases which affect drug users and the wider community. The relative health impact of the illicit use of drugs varies depending on the specific type of drug used and the circumstances of its use. Overall, however, illicit use of drugs (and illicit drug use disorders) account for an increasing proportion of the global burden of disease (moving from the 18th to 15th ranking risk factor between 1990 and 2010) (IHME 2013). Illicit use of drugs, also referred to here as 'illicit drug use', includes use of illegal drugs, non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs (an illicit behaviour), and inappropriate use of other substances (such as inhalants).

Currently Ice is causing a devastating impact affecting our families and society.

A report authored by Professor Alison Ritter, the director of the drug policy modelling program at the University of NSW (UNSW), was released in June 2013 calculated that the Australian Government continues to spend A\$1.7 billion dollars on its annual illicit drug response. Entitled "Government Drug Policy Expenditure in Australia", the report also concluded that the harm reduction arm of the government's policy, with 2.1 per cent of the drugs budget, or A\$36 million, devoted to harm reduction in the 2009-10 financial year. During the same time period, A\$361 million, or 21 per cent, was directed towards treatment and A\$1.1 billion was expended on law enforcement. The report identifies a significant decrease in the proportion of funds allocated to harm reduction over time and Ritter expressed her concern in an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper:

## 2. Abstract

I have been helping people with drug addiction for some 25 years. I am motivated to continue fighting against the drug epidemic, I managed a Rehabilitation Centre and I know how it can benefit those trapped with drug addiction.

The intensity and damage that we see today, especially with the increase of ice affordability and availability is more than alarming.

The sad reality is that drug addicts –in most cases- do not seek help, and sometimes seek help but do not want to have any inconvenience, i.e. they will not go willingly to a rehabilitation Centre.

The Singapore model shows how “tough love” or “caring enough to intervene” has proven to be a compassionate and efficient way to achieve positive results.

The impact by implementing this strategy I believe would bring positive results. It has impacted individuals, families and the society in Singapore for some 20 years.

The results will be very good. In Singapore, individuals and families have been very thankful to the Government for caring for their family members. It will not completely erase drug addiction, but it will reduce it considerably.

As an example, in Singapore, in a period of time of three years, the number of addicts arrested had fallen from 6,165 down to 4,752. This is a considerable improvement.

### **3. Problem Statement / Introduction**

Besides other drugs, we experience the dramatic spreading of ice-addiction in Metropolitan and rural areas. Individuals, families, our society are experiencing the cruel repercussions of this epidemic. Crime is increasing and at this rate, the police force and other Government Departments will be overwhelmed with the situation. Our population will be in even more danger.

### **4. Proposed Solutions**

#### ***a. Introduction of Solution***

The Drug problem is not new. Our successive Governments have been pouring billions of dollars into programs which have not been successful. We need to invest in an effective strategy and change of policies in order to start to see positive long term results. The formation of a National Council to advise the Government on anti-drug measures would be necessary.

Progress will be made when drug-addicts are removed from our streets and introduced to the Rehabilitation Centres and halfway houses where they will receive medical assistance, counselling, job skills, mediation with families and re-introduction into society.

Detention Centres/Rehabilitation Centres will have to be organized. Cooperation with other Organizations and Agencies will be necessary, the population needs to be educated and informed about the situation and the solution required.

This will be possible by re-directing Government funds into these areas to make the investment fruitful.

#### ***b. Application of Solution***

We have a tangible solution. The Government in Singapore has been successful for many years. Here is their main strategy:

Prevention, Drug Education at all levels, i.e. Schools, Media, Seminars, etc.

Enforcement, which aims to apprehend traffickers and addicts

Treatment/Rehabilitation in Detention Centres and Halfway Houses (including counselling, teaching job skills) which aims to reform and deter addicts.

Aftercare and Continued Rehabilitation, which aims to reintegrate addicts into society.

This is only possible when Government changes policies and legislation in order to give the necessary authority to apprehend not only traffickers, but also addicts.

### ***c. Future Direction / Long-Term Focus***

This is a long term solution to the problem. Government and non-Government Organizations need to be involved in the four areas of prevention, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare. The support of the community is essential, communicating the goals and vision to the wide community needs to be done effectively.

## **4. Conclusion**

The model in Singapore has proven to be effective, here is a quote from the Singapore authorities:

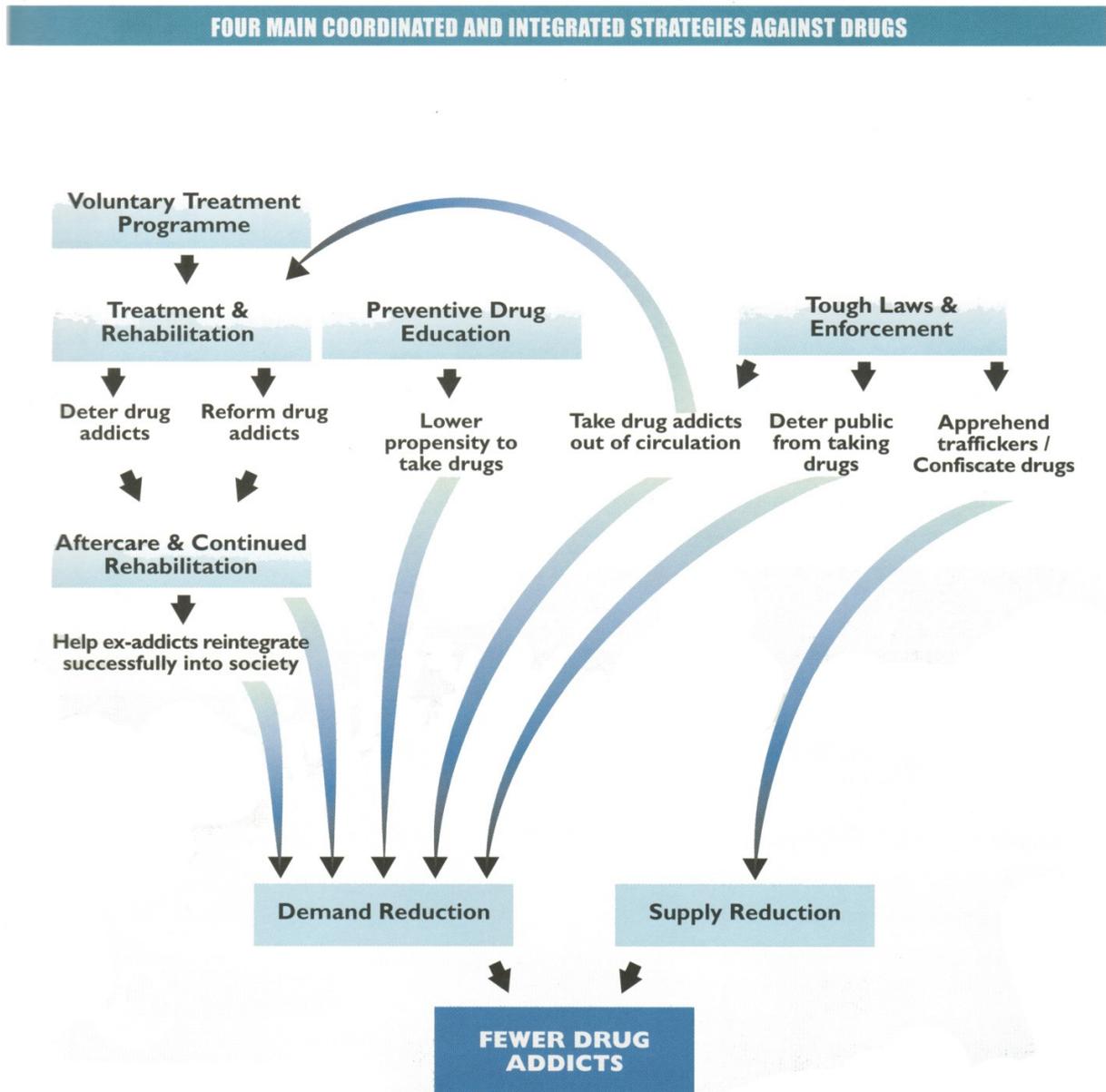
“With all these efforts, Singapore has one of the lowest prevalence of drug abuse worldwide, even though it has not been entirely eliminated. Over two decades, the number of drug abusers arrested each year has declined by two-thirds, from [over 6,000 in the early 1990s](#) to about [2,000 last year](#). Fewer than two in 10 abusers released from prison or drug rehabilitation centres [relapse within two years](#).”

We do not have traffickers pushing drugs openly in the streets, nor do we need to run needle exchange centres. Because of our strict laws, Singapore does not have to contend with major drug syndicates linked to organized crime, unlike some other countries.

Strong community support against drug abuse has been critical to our fight against drugs. Singapore society resolutely rejects drug abuse. Several voluntary welfare organizations run halfway houses to help recovering addicts adjust back into society. Many employers also come forward to offer reformed drug addicts employment opportunities”.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Scenario



## ***Appendix B – Options***

The enhancements referred to are as follows:

- a) Reduction of death and disability
- b) Reduction of diseases
- c) Reduction of welfare dependency
- d) Positive improvement of families, this influencing future generations
- e) Society will benefit with less crime
- f) The authorities (Police, Dept. of Justice) will be having less involvement

## ***Appendix C – Authors***

Mr. Lim Hock San, Chairman of the National Council Against Drug Abuse

## ***Appendix D – References***

Towards A Drug-Free Singapore

Strategies, Policies and Programs against Drugs

Published by: National Council Against Drug Abuse, Singapore

