

METHAMPHETAMINE ACTION PLAN TASKFORCE

**482. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the methamphetamine action task force that was established by the McGowan Labor government to find practical ways to reduce methamphetamine harm, and tackle the supply and demand of this insidious drug. Can the minister update the house on the community consultation the task force has undertaken and what it has revealed about the challenges our community faces when it comes to tackling this problem?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question, coming from someone who has put a lot of time and effort into working with the task force so that we can better understand this complex problem that is impacting on our community, and making sure that we are pulling together a plan that is comprehensive and seeks to deal with the issue, the impact of methamphetamine on our community. We know it is an important issue because we see it every day. Yesterday I released a report titled, “What the Taskforce Heard”. It is the outcome of the public consultation process of the meth task force. Yesterday, we heard from Tom de Souza. Tom is a young man of 23 years who has himself been impacted by an addiction to methamphetamine. He talked about the impact it had on his life and his family and the way it envelopes and ruins lives. He is a great example of just how low a person can go with the impact of methamphetamine but what we can also do if we pull someone out of that spiral. Tom is an inspiration to all of us. Members might be interested to know that Tom does not come from a marginalised background; he comes from an affluent community. It is a demonstration that methamphetamine impacts all of us.

This report provides a window for everyone into the world of methamphetamine addiction and its impact on our community. The meth task force held over 70 meetings with more than 500 people attending those meetings across the metropolitan area and regional centres. The extensive consultation was undertaken in metropolitan and regional areas in WA, including Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome, Northam, Albany and Exmouth. This report provides everyone with an insight into not only the complexities associated with methamphetamine addiction, but also the difficulties in addressing it. People talked to the task force about the need for a focus on prevention and early intervention; the importance of reducing the stigma around methamphetamine addiction; to encourage users to seek help earlier and help families feel less isolated; the difficulty in accessing and navigating a complex system to help and respond to people in crisis, particularly in regional areas; and the need for more practical support for families of individuals trying to build their lives. The McGowan government takes a three-pronged approach to methamphetamine. It is about reducing the harm, making sure we have the services to assist people and their families; reducing supply by ensuring we have the proper law enforcement regime to make sure that, where we can, we intercept this drug before it gets to our community; and, of course, reducing demand—that is, educating the community so that they understand just what an insidious drug this is and how it can wreck and destroy lives and communities.

I am very much looking forward to the outcome of the methamphetamine task force work, under the leadership provided by Ron Alexander as chairman. I want to commend the member for Bunbury for the work that he has put into being a member of that task force, and I think we all as members of Parliament look forward to getting on top of this scourge on our society, methamphetamine.