

Judge says WA worst in world for meth P1

OUR GIANT PROBLEM

■ Tim Clarke

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A senior judge says levels of ice use in WA are among the worst in the civilised world and are a sign that the so-called war on drugs has been lost.

During a sentencing hearing of a meth dealer in the District Court yesterday, Judge Philip McCann said the State's ice epidemic was "a national and international disgrace", caused by Chinese drug cartels targeting the WA economy when it was booming.

He said that while ice continued to pour into the State

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Man jailed for role in drug gang

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from Asia "by the tonne", the supply had become impossible to stop.

Police and courts should now turn their attention to the street-level user and dealer.

"Western Australia has the unenviable position of probably being the worst jurisdiction in the civilised world for methamphetamine offending, by which of course I include recreational use," Judge McCann said. "It is now accepted in informed circles that it is impossible to stop the supply of methamphetamine from the criminal gangs in Asia."

"That horse bolted years ago when WA's rich, booming economy allowed it to become the preferred market of the international drug gangs."

"We are the world leaders. It is a national disgrace. It's an international disgrace."

Judge McCann based his comments on figures contained in the 2013 national drug strategy household survey, which revealed 3.8 per cent of people aged over 13 in WA reported using methamphetamine in the previous year.

Health Department data indicates the problem has got worse since then.

Judge McCann's remarks came during the sentencing of Beau Darran Udell, who the court heard spiralled out of control after his ice habit escalated about 2013 and who was dealing ice out of the Atrium Hotel in Mandurah. He was jailed for four years.

A day earlier, Taiwanese man Kai-Hung Hsu, 26, was jailed for

12 years for his role in a drug gang calling themselves The Company. They smuggled more than 90kg of ice into Perth and more than 100kg into Melbourne.

WA's Supreme Court was told Hsu was hired as a driver, to be paid \$200 a day. But Justice Bruno Flannaca said despite his lowly pay, Hsu was a "trusted underling" of The Company.

Judge McCann's bleak synopsis echoed Premier Colin Barnett's assessment this month when he told a social services conference that the war on ice was all but unwinnable.

In last week's State Budget, Treasurer Mike Nahan unveiled a \$15 million, two-year boost to the Mental Health Commission targeting methamphetamine use and \$5.5 million for extra roadside drug testing.

Ms Josephine Baxter: CEO Drug Free Australia

Ms Baxter entered the Alcohol and Drug sector as CEO of Life Education in South Australia in 2000 and in 2002 accepted the position of National Director of Programs & Training for Life Education Australia, based in Sydney. She has also worked closely with teams at Odyssey House, a drug rehabilitation facility in Melbourne, Australia. In her current position at Drug Free Australia she oversees strategies in capacity building, project management and community development, focussing on drug prevention.

www.drugfree.org.au Ms Baxter is a current member of the Australian National Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drugs, (ANACAD). She is also member of the International Taskforce on Strategic Drug Policy and Vice President, World Federation Against Drugs. www.wfad.se In 2013 Ms Baxter was appointed to the Board of the Dalgarno Institute, (a coalition of alcohol and drug prevention educators), and is now Vice President of Dalgarno Institute. www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au Recently Ms Baxter, a Rotarian, has been appointed to the international board of Prospective Rotarian Action Group – Addiction Prevention (PRAG-AP), representing Australia. www.rag-ap.org

Associate Professor Stuart Reece:

Prof Stuart Reece has worked actively in drug addiction at both the clinical and research levels since 1998, at the formal request of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. His focus is in assisting people to become free of whatever drugs they are troubled by including cannabis, tobacco, opioids, alcohol, amphetamines and others. He has been instrumental and a key figure in Australia in progressing the naltrexone implants and advocating for their more widespread use for alcohol, heroin and amphetamine addictions. The control of gene expression in different cells at different times has recently been shown to be a major factor in cellular memory formation in neuroscience, immunology and cell and tissue type lineage specification, in cancer, stress, and drug addiction. This programming carried on and around the genes is called epigenetics. Dr Reece has been actively involved in various clinical and theoretical research projects in epigenomics and genetics now for several years and recently published some ground breaking research in the field together with Professor Gary Hulse at the University of Western Australia, showing that the previously reported statistical associations of cannabis with major congenital malformations, cancer and inheritable cancer formation were in fact of a causal nature, which has become an important article widely reported in both the scientific and popular press.