

WA LABOR

Methamphetamine Action Plan

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES



A Fresh Approach for WA

WA Labor Policy | January 2017

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

A McGowan Labor Government will implement a state-wide, coordinated and targeted Methamphetamine Action Plan (MAP) focussed on three key areas to reduce demand, reduce harm and reduce supply. This is the most comprehensive plan to tackle methamphetamine use ever released in WA.

WA Labor will work with experts and stakeholders on early targeted prevention, better treatment services and effective withdrawal services. The MAP will build on what is currently seen as best practice, providing education, training, rehabilitation, coordination and research.

There will be more focus on breaking the cycle of drug related crime in our community by ensuring that there is a focus on rehabilitation in prisons with a specialised treatment and withdrawal services.

The flow on effects of methamphetamine use are devastating and will not be solved by prosecution alone. We need to ensure that equal emphasis is given to reducing both the demand and the harm caused by methamphetamines.

As part of a State-wide integrated plan to tackle methamphetamine use a McGowan Labor Government will invest \$45 million over four years of new and existing budget allocations to implement our Methamphetamine Action Plan.

The implementation of the MAP will be overseen by a Taskforce established to ensure cross government cooperation in the battle against the devastating impact methamphetamine use is having on WA families and communities.



“I will implement a state-wide, coordinated and targeted Methamphetamine Action Plan to help tackle the devastation that Meth is having on our community.”

Mark

STAY INFORMED:

markmcgowan.com.au/MAP

 Mark McGowan MP

 mark.mcgowan@walabor.org.au

METHAMPHETAMINE ACTION PLAN

As part of a State-wide integrated plan to tackle methamphetamine use a McGowan Labor Government will implement a Methamphetamine Action Plan.

As part of the Methamphetamine Action Plan a McGowan Labor Government will:

- **Invest an additional \$2 million per annum into treatment facilities to respond to early intervention and severe methamphetamine dependence.**
- **Expand specialist drug services into rural and regional areas of need and open two specialised rehabilitation centres, one in the South West and one in the Kimberley.**
- **Investigate ways to ‘fast-track’ guardianship and administration applications for those methamphetamine addicts who are no longer able to make their own decisions and need help to manage their affairs and their rehabilitation.**
- **Introduce a Mental Health Observation area at Royal Perth Hospital emergency department.**
- **Work with drug and alcohol education agencies to ensure WA schools have the most up to date programs to better inform our young people.**
- **Ensure WA Police have the resources to significantly increase the volume of roadside alcohol and drug testing of WA drivers.**
- **Establishing a Taskforce to oversee the implementation of the MAP and ensure that coordination occurs across government.**
- **Create two dedicated drug and alcohol rehabilitation prisons, one for men and one for women to break the cycle of drug related crime in our community.**
- **Create a 10 person Prisoner Triage Unit to operate in those courts dealing with the greatest number of short sentence drug-related offenders.**

Reducing the level of methamphetamine use in the community will be one of the key performance indicators (KPIs) by which the new government will be measured.

A McGowan Labor Government will break down the silos across government and ensure that there is a coordinated plan to tackle the methamphetamine crisis facing our community.

Access to rehabilitation services

Currently there is a lack of residential and community based treatment facilities leaving some addicts waiting for treatment or travelling large distances from home to access rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation services need to be available during that crucial moment when a person acknowledges they need help.

Methamphetamines initially give users a heightened sense of wellbeing and confidence which then converts after a period of time into paranoia and agitation often leading to violence. Amphetamine specific rehabilitation services need specially trained staff that understand the physical risk posed by meth affected patients.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will invest an additional \$2 million per annum into treatment facilities to respond to early intervention and severe methamphetamine dependence.**

The impact of methamphetamine addiction on regional communities in WA has been devastating. Earlier this year more than 40 former ice users and their families met in Bunbury to discuss how to best tackle the scourge of methamphetamine use in regional WA.¹

They called for urgent rehabilitation services in the South West; “The need’s phenomenal, people need somewhere to go to get clean. They can’t just do it on their own.”²

There is a distinct lack of services available in regional communities. WA Labor recognises the importance of having these services available close to home where family and the community can remain connected.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will expand specialist drug services into rural and regional areas of need and open two specialised rehabilitation centres, one in the South West and one in the Kimberley.**

The final location of the centres will be determined following consultation with service providers and the community to ensure that the best clinical outcomes are achieved.

Within the model of treatment, the MAP will include support services that cater for the long withdrawal and recovery period and high relapse rate associated with methamphetamine use. It is important to remain mindful that methamphetamine use may be in conjunction with alcohol and other drug and mental health issues (co-morbidity). It is critical that services be flexible and holistic in the model of treatment.

Supporting families to fast track guardianship application

For the families of methamphetamine addicts, frustration has been directed at the length of time for the State Administrative Tribunal to rule on guardianship and administration applications which may take between 12 to 14 weeks.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will investigate ways to ‘fast-track’ guardianship and administration applications for those methamphetamine addicts who are no longer able to make their own decisions and need help to manage their affairs and their rehabilitation.**

¹ Loney, Georgia, ABC News Online, 2 April 2016, “Former ice addicts want more rehabilitation services in regional WA”, accessed online at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-04/call-for-more-drug-rehabilitation-in-the-regions/7297000>

² Ibid

Mental Health Observation areas at Royal Perth Hospital

The open layout of emergency departments is not ideal for managing drug and alcohol affected people where they can be disruptive to patients and staff and at worst, pose a security and safety risk.

Mental Health Observation Units will be dedicated quiet safe sections within hospital emergency departments to help patients with mental health conditions or drug and alcohol intoxication who are not acute enough to require admission, but need assistance and close supervision for up to 72 hours.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will introduce a Mental Health Observation area at Royal Perth Hospital Emergency Department.**

Having an observation area dedicated for drug and alcohol affected people, separated from the mainstream emergency department will improve clinical outcomes and ensure specialist staff can be provided rather than general nursing staff. This will ensure that there are specially trained staff to handle acute presentations at public hospital emergency departments.

Reducing the demand for Methamphetamines

Western Australia has the highest rate of amphetamine use in Australia at 3.8 per cent which is one in every 25 people, compared to the national rate of 2.1 per cent.

WA Labor will build on our current drug education programs in schools to include the facts about methamphetamine use and help teachers, parents and the wider community to identify and support our young people at risk.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will work with drug and alcohol education agencies to ensure WA schools have the most up to date programs to better inform our young people.**

It is vital that we get the message across to our young people about the indiscriminate addictive nature of methamphetamines and the aggressive, violent results it can have on the person, family and the wider community.

Making Our Roads Safer

The rate of random drug and alcohol testing of drivers in WA is well below that of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Figures obtained by the RAC WA show that between January and October 2015, NSW had conducted 97,000 tests which is equivalent to one test per 78 drivers. During the same period, Victoria conducted 100,000 equivalents to one test per 59 drivers and South Australia conducted 40,000 making their ratio closer to one test per 40 drivers.

Meanwhile, in WA, 24,986 tests were conducted making our ratio one test per 104 drivers.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will ensure WA Police have the resources to significantly increase the volume of roadside alcohol and drug testing of WA drivers.**

Safe driving requires good judgement and concentration. WA State Government figures indicate that in 20 per cent of serious and fatal car accidents, methamphetamines and other drugs are a factor. More Police testing on our roads will provide more of the deterrent needed to stop people from driving whilst under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Measuring our success

The flow on effects of methamphetamine use are devastating and will not be solved by prosecution alone. We need to ensure that equal emphasis is given to reducing both the demand and the harm caused by methamphetamines.

A McGowan Labor Government MAP will require coordination across the Department of Health, Mental Health, Education, Police, Judiciary and Corrective Services.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will establish a Taskforce to oversee the implementation of the MAP and ensure that coordination occurs across Government.**

The responsibility of executing the Methamphetamine Action Plan will sit with a high-level taskforce with representatives from the aforementioned government agencies, business leaders and subject matter experts from the non-government sector.

As part of the MAP, the Taskforce will:

- Produce measurable performance indicators of success.
- Ensure programs are targeted to areas of greatest need, especially in regional areas.
- Build specialist capability.
- Measure training outcomes to prevent occupational violence.
- Prioritise targeted community engagement, prevention and promotion initiatives.
- Produce recommendations for inclusion in the MAP.
- Review successful interventions from interstate and overseas for adoption in WA.

A NEW ROLE FOR OUR PRISONS

Rehabilitation Prisons

A McGowan Labor Government will create dedicated drug and alcohol rehabilitation prisons to target low level non violent offenders serving short prison sentences.

One prison will provide rehabilitation for men, the other will be dedicated to women. Effort and resources currently spread thinly across the entire prison system will be concentrated more heavily in these two locations focussing on those non violent prisoners who are not yet hardened, long-term offenders and who offer the greatest likelihood of rehabilitation.

The creation of dedicated rehabilitation prisons will be achieved through transforming the tasking of two existing prisons.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will create two dedicated drug and alcohol rehabilitation prisons, one for men and one for women to break the cycle of drug related crime in our community.**

Wandoo prison, which is currently operated on contract by Serco and designated a Young Men's Prison, will be re-tasked with provision of comprehensive drug and alcohol rehabilitation services for short term non violent women offenders. The women's drug rehabilitation prison will have capacity to accommodate 80 drug and/or alcohol addicted women at any one time.

The new Women's Remand Centre that has been built inside Hakea Men's prison (Sodexo recently announced as preferred operator) will be re-tasked to provide drug and alcohol rehabilitation services to short term non violent male offenders. There will be a capacity for 256 drug and/or alcohol addicted men in this facility.

Offenders who receive short sentences are those who have committed offences at the lower end of the spectrum. Often they are in the relatively early stages of an offending pathway. These offenders offer the greatest hope of rehabilitation if they receive targeted drug and alcohol programs. Only non violent offenders would be eligible.

Despite this obvious opportunity to reduce re-offending, currently more than half of those convicted for addictions offending receive no rehabilitation.

A Prisoner Triage Unit will select suitable offenders

Currently, all offenders sent to Western Australian prisons are initially classified as maximum security and must be processed and housed in a maximum security prison until their classification is downgraded.

The process of assessing and downgrading prisoners in our massively overcrowded system can take many months. A consequence of the delay is that around 40 per cent of the Casuarina maximum security prison population is comprised of prisoners on remand – effectively serving as an overflow facility for Hakea Remand prison.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will create a 10 person Prisoner Triage Unit to operate in those courts dealing with the greatest number of short sentence drug-related offenders.**

The Unit will circumvent the current process and select prisoners who have been given short term sentences for non violent drug related offences and divert them straight from the court to a rehabilitation prison.

This practice will prevent low level offenders from encountering hardened criminals within the maximum security remand prison and will provide the rehabilitation effort with the greatest likelihood of success.

Methamphetamine rehabilitation is not occurring in WA prisons

The most comprehensive study into health and substance abuse problems amongst Western Australian prisoners ever undertaken was released in April 2015 and confirmed exceptionally high rates of substance use and abuse in those entering WA prisons.

Three quarters of all men and women entering WA prisons fulfilled criteria for clinically diagnosed drug and/or alcohol disorder. Over 60 per cent of adults entering the prison system had used amphetamines or methamphetamine in the previous 12 months. This was 41 times the rate for the general female population and 22 times the rate for general population of males.

Under current State Government policies, prisoners on remand are not eligible for rehabilitation programs. During 2016 Budget Estimates Hearings, the government confirmed that between July 2012 and May 2016, the proportion of offenders in the state's prisons on remand (not having been sentenced) almost doubled from 17 per cent to 30 per cent.

Furthermore, after offenders are sentenced, the majority who receive sentences of 12 months or less leave prison without any rehabilitation.

In the 2013/14 financial year, just over 60 per cent of offenders who served a sentence over 6 months but less than 12 months in duration, left prison having not received the rehabilitation programs they were assessed as requiring.¹

¹ WA Legislative Assembly Question On Notice #5220, 15 March 2016

The rate of failure in program delivery grew in the next financial year 2014/15 with 64 per cent leaving prison without rehabilitation.²

We need prisons that are drug free

The Liberal State Government has cut funding to drug detection activity across the state prison system. As a result, the limited numbers of drug detection dogs are shared across the system making detection inconsistent and predictable. Funds for random urinalysis are also insufficient across the system resulting in likelihood of more drug use in prisons.

The State's primary entry point for male prisoners, Hakea remand prison, was recently the subject of an Inspector of Custodial Services Report which confirmed drug use by prisoners.

A McGowan Labor Government will ensure that each of the drug rehabilitation prisons is resourced for dedicated drug detection dog presence and high rotation random urinalysis.

Instead of having to compete with the wider prison system for limited resources, these two sites will have adequate detection activity to prevent in-prison drug use. Any prisoner detected through these processes will be subject to relevant additional charges and diverted to the mainstream prison system.

² WA Legislative Assembly Question On Notice #5220, 15 March 2016

Post release support is vital to success

Offenders serving short term sentences for drug related crime are highly unlikely to receive post-release supervision under the current system. Having completed a short sentence in a maximum security prison where they will have been placed in close proximity to serious, long term offenders, these prisoners are currently released into the community with no further oversight. It is likely that this process is contributing to the increased rate of re-offending occurring under the Liberal Government. In effect, our prisons have become crime universities, taking minor offenders and releasing or 'graduating' them far more likely to reoffend.

A McGowan Labor Government will reallocate half of the current total annual expenditure on prison drug and alcohol rehabilitation to ensure post release supervision of short term prisoners who have completed their sentences in the new rehabilitation prisons.

Specialist drug and alcohol service providers will be engaged to extend supervision of released prisoners long after their release date.

WA Labor will ensure that service providers engaged for in-prison rehabilitation under the renegotiated rehabilitation prison contracts, are the same providers used for post release supervision – this will ensure continuity in knowledge of the offender and program delivery.

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A New Role for Our Prisons

markmcgowan.com.au/MAP |  Mark McGowan MP

Printed and authorised by Patrick Gorman, 54 Cheriton St, Perth.