

Thursday, 1 September 2022

Government frozen on Ice Inquiry response for two and a half years

The NSW Government's enduring neglect in failing to respond to the multi-million dollar Ice Inquiry is condemning drug users to ongoing legal and health impacts while the damage to communities continues.

President of the Law Society of NSW Joanne van der Plaats says this weekend's two-year six-month milestone of inaction demonstrates the Government's lack of commitment to tackling the scourge of drugs other than by locking people up.

"The herculean efforts of the former Ice Commissioner Dan Howard to bring down a report and recommendations designed to address the impacts of illicit drug use have been ignored for too long," Ms van der Plaats said.

"There is no question that high level drug importers, manufacturers and dealers should be subject to the full force of the law, but the Government's continuing 'tough on crime' approach to drug use is failing. As law enforcement experts told the Inquiry, we can't arrest our way out of drug problems.

"The Law Society recognises the expansion of a Drug Court through a yet to be commenced pilot in Dubbo with an associated rehabilitation centre, as well as the recently announced Aboriginal Justice Package. While these initiatives are welcome, they represent a piecemeal response to barely a handful of the Ice Inquiry's recommendations."

The final report into the *Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'* contained 109 recommendations taking evidence from experts and receiving more than 250 submissions. The Government's [interim response published](#) on 4 March 2020 rejected a small number of recommendations aimed at harm minimisation but promised a whole of Government response.

President of the NSW Bar Association Gaby Bashir SC said it is time for the NSW Government to end its silence on drug reform.

"Two and a half years ago the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug Ice recommended decriminalisation of the personal possession and use of prohibited drugs. Since then, the NSW Government has failed to respond to the overwhelming majority of the recommendations, despite repeated calls for action by the legal and medical professions, addiction specialists and the inquiry's own commissioner, Professor Dan Howard SC", Ms Bashir said.

"The New South Wales Bar Association supports all the Special Commission's recommendations. Diverting drug users towards health intervention, education and rehabilitation is being smart on crime."

Chief Executive Officer of the NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Service Karly Warner said the NSW Government is standing in the way of progress by stalling action on the Ice Inquiry's recommendations.

"Aboriginal people are paying the price, as we are targeted and ultimately bear the brunt of heavy penalties and imprisonment," Ms Warner said.

MEDIA RELEASE



“Building a fair and evidence-based drug policy for NSW will contribute to closing the gap in imprisonment rates. The Ice Inquiry’s recommendations are a critical first step in that road map to get us there.”

Professor Howard recently stated the lack of a formal drug policy in NSW is ‘like a car hurtling town a highway without a driver’ and that ‘people are tired of seeing these promises’ and ‘want to see some action’.

Two and a half years is long past time for the Government to implement urgently the remaining recommendations of the Ice Inquiry so drug users can start rebuilding their lives and communities can begin to heal.

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