



Letter from the Minister – Project STOP

The Australian Government has been working closely with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia over recent years to develop a range of initiatives which can prevent the diversion of pseudoephedrine, while also ensuring its continued availability to those with a genuine therapeutic need.

The Australian Government is proud to fund the national roll-out of Project STOP. Following the excellent results of a Project STOP trial in Queensland, where the number of clandestine laboratory detections has fallen by 25 per cent over the last year, we predict that Project STOP will have a significant impact on illegal methamphetamine supply across Australia.

Methamphetamine is Australia's most significant drug problem. This dangerous and addictive drug has devastating behavioural consequences, including the potential for acute psychosis and violence in those using the drug.

Methamphetamine is unlike other illicit drugs because it is mainly produced domestically in backyard laboratories and uses a range of legitimately available 'precursor' chemicals. The pseudoephedrine used in cold and flu preparations has been the principal chemical used in these clandestine laboratories. The last decade has seen a 650 per cent increase in detections of clandestine laboratories.

This diversion of pseudoephedrine in the form of cold and flu preparations has unfortunately put our pharmacists at the front line in the fight against methamphetamine.

The introduction of Project STOP nationally will enhance the ability of pharmacists to identify illegitimate requests for pseudoephedrine products. For this reason, the support of the pharmacy sector and the community is crucial to ensure Project STOP is effective in preventing the diversion of pseudoephedrine.

The national roll-out of Project STOP is a testament to the success of the Australian Government's collaborative approach to controlling precursors, which is based on a \$5.4 million national strategy and a strong partnership between federal, state and territory police, forensic and health authorities, and the pharmaceutical and chemicals industry.

The Australian Government has developed a strong partnership with the pharmacy sector and commends it for its ongoing commitment to reducing the supply of illicit drugs into our communities.

Yours sincerely

David Johnston
Minister for Justice and Customs
Senator for Western Australia

June 2007