



## AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS

The term amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) refers to a category of illicit drugs which includes amphetamine, methylamphetamine and phenethylamines. ATS are synthetic drugs generally produced in illegal clandestine laboratories by processing chemical ingredients.

ATS speed up the central nervous system and produce effects similar to that of adrenalin. ATS pose a serious health risk to both users and manufacturers for a number of reasons, including inconsistent purity levels, presence of unknown chemical additives and dangerous production methods.

### EXTENT

The forms of ATS most commonly used in Australia are amphetamine, methylamphetamine and MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy.

Methylamphetamine is the third most commonly used illicit drug in Australia. It is available in tablet, powder (speed), paste (base) and crystallised (ice) form. The form most commonly used is crystal.

MDMA is the second most commonly used illicit drug in Australia, after cannabis. MDMA is commonly available in tablet form, but is also available as a capsule, crystal or powder.

### HARMS

Due to slight structural differences, methylamphetamine produces a stronger nervous system response than amphetamine. Short-term effects of amphetamine and methylamphetamine use may include sweating, headaches, anxiety and paranoia. High doses can result in blurred vision, hallucinations, tremors and stroke. Long-term use can result in paranoia, depression, increased risk of heart failure and stroke.

Users may take other drugs to enhance the effects of amphetamine and methylamphetamine, or to counteract undesired side effects. This can place increased pressure on a user's body, including heart rate and respiration.

Short-term effects of MDMA use include impairment of cognitive functions—such as perception and mental associations—dry mouth, headache, nausea, blurred vision and insomnia. Long-term use may lead to poor memory, flashbacks, panic attacks, psychosis and irreversible impairment to cognitive functions.

### TRENDS

- The number of ATS (excluding MDMA) detections at the Australian border increased this reporting period, with the 2 367 detections in 2013-14 the highest on record.
- While the weight of ATS (excluding MDMA) detected at the border decreased in 2013-14, it is the second highest on record.
- The number of MDMA detections at the border also decreased, but is the second highest on record.
- The number of national ATS seizures and arrests in 2013-14 is the highest on record.

### LINKS TO SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

The Australian ATS market is large, with high levels of organised crime involvement in the importation, manufacture and distribution of ATS throughout Australia.