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Committee Secretariat
House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretariat

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGED CARE AND SPORT'S INQUIRY INTO THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for the invitation to provide a submission to the House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport's inquiry into the *Health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia*. In line with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's (ACIC) legislated role and remit, we do not offer a formal submission against the terms of reference. However, we offer insights into Australia's illicit drug markets that may be of interest to the Committee and assist in informing its deliberations.

As Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, the ACIC collects criminal intelligence using a variety of capabilities – both overt and covert – and we use our expert analysis and assessment skills to produce unique and actionable insights to inform actions and decisions to make Australia hostile to serious and organised crime (SOC), including to the harms of illicit drugs and precursors.

SOC remains an enduring threat to Australia's security and safety. The criminal landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation in the past 12 to 24 months. Today's SOC networks are borderless, decentralised, digitally enabled, and increasingly embedded within legitimate systems. They operate with the agility and sophistication of multinational businesses – strategic, networked and adaptive.

In 2022–23, SOC was estimated to cost Australia up to \$68.7 billion, with illicit drugs accounting for over \$18.7 billion of that total. These groups exploit high demand and elevated drug prices in Australia, focusing relentlessly on maximising profit at the expense of community wellbeing and national security.

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The ACIC collaborates closely with domestic and international partners to target the importation and trafficking of illicit drugs, and contributes to meeting the goals of Australia's *National Drug Strategy 2017-26* by:

- delivering leading-edge, coordinated national research and intelligence on illicit drugs and licit drugs that can be abused, including through the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (the Program) and other intelligence reporting
- identifying and improving understanding of drug markets and organised crime groups that operate within them, to allow effective targeting and disruption by law enforcement and other response agencies
- providing subject matter expertise to inform policies, legislation and regulatory processes at both state and national levels
- developing intelligence products that identify market trends and new methodologies used by organised crime groups, and recommending responses to harden the operating environment to exploitation by these groups.

The Program, having recently produced its 24th report, offers robust, valuable insights into illicit drug consumption trends and emerging threats across Australia. The latest report, publicly available on the ACIC's website, highlights that:

- 22.2 tonnes of methylamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and MDMA was consumed nationally between August 2023 and August 2024 – an increase of 34% from the previous year
- the methylamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA and heroin consumed between August 2023 and August 2024 had an estimated street value of \$11.5 billion, with methylamphetamine accounting for 78% of this (\$8.9 billion)
- this concerning increase reflects the recovery of illicit drug markets following the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and disruptions to global supply chains
- SOC groups have been highly motivated to rapidly re-establish and expand their operations, taking advantage of increased demand and evolving trafficking methods to supply these highly profitable markets
- a multi-dimensional approach – targeting supply, demand and harm reduction – is essential to reducing drug use and its impacts in Australia
- the Program data presents opportunities for coordinated strategies between intelligence, law enforcement and health agencies to improve community safety.

We encourage the Committee to review our latest [National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program report](#), which may be of particular interest to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Heather Cook
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission