

Trends in drug markets in Australia: implications for policy and practice and research

Louisa Degenhardt, PhD

Senior Lecturer

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

University of New South Wales

Sydney NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA

Illicit drug markets are dynamic, yet measurement of trends in drug use is often limited. There have been significant shifts in drug markets in Australia in recent years. Many of these shifts have been relatively well documented due to the monitoring systems that have been set in place to detect and measure trends in illicit drug use across this country. There is good evidence that the use of ecstasy and other amphetamine type stimulants has increased around the world in recent years; there have also been significant shifts in heroin and methamphetamine markets. This paper examines trends in ecstasy and related drug markets in NSW over the past six years using data from the Party Drugs Initiative (PDI) and the Illicit Drug Reporting System, two early warning systems that synthesise data from samples of regular illicit drug users, key experts with knowledge about these users or drug markets, and the collection of routine data that may reflect the use or harms of ecstasy and related drug use. It will also draw from recent work examining changes in drug markets in Australia that were documented by these monitoring systems.