

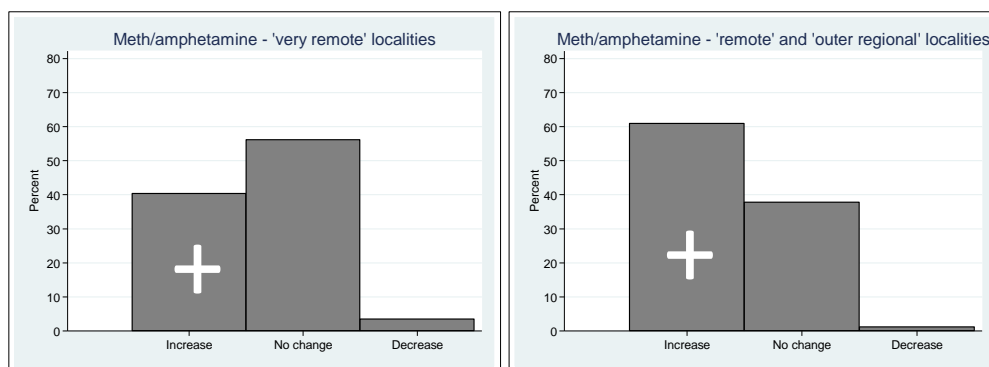
## Meth/amphetamine use: north and north-east Queensland

During 2014, concerns began to be reported by key community people and service providers in rural and remote Indigenous communities in north Queensland about the appearance of 'new drugs'. In 2015 the Indigenous Leaders Forum of the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Queensland Police Service instigated research, led by Associate Professor Alan Clough, to investigate the impacts of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) including meth/amphetamine in northern and north-east Queensland.

To inform the resulting environmental scan the following information sources were used:

- Survey data describing views of community residents on whether 'new drugs' were being used in the community (ten communities, 1158 participants)
- A web-based survey of front-line service providers across sectors including health, law enforcement and emergency services to capture the impacts of alcohol and other drug use on workload (157 participants across outer regional, remote and very remote sites)
- Interviews with Indigenous community members and service providers in selected localities to capture information about the prevalence and impacts of meth/amphetamine use (11 sites across the region, 53 participants).

The results indicated that use of ATS including meth/amphetamine was established in some outer regional and remote towns in the region. This was associated with an increase over the six months prior to the survey in both ATS-related workload for relevant service providers and impacts on users and their families. Evidence of this use appeared to decrease in the more remote sites, indicating that relative isolation currently provides some protection from access and uptake of new drugs. Nonetheless, there were reports of disturbing isolated incidences in very remote communities strongly suggestive of ATS involvement, prompting concern among community leaders, residents and service providers regarding the emergence of its use. There was strong agreement among service providers across sectors of health and enforcement that the major drug-related workload of frontline service providers was more often caused by alcohol, a combination of alcohol and drugs, or cannabis, than ATS including meth/amphetamine.



Perceived changes in workload during the past six months compared with last year (2014) by remote localities

Based on results reported in the attached document, we make recommendations to address current and emerging drug and alcohol issues. These recommendations include a coordinated, collaborative approach between relevant service sectors and communities. Importantly, work-force capacity requires building, along with improvement of culturally-safe approaches to ensure access to services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This should include the provision of support to Indigenous meth/amphetamine users and their families and increased access to residential rehabilitation services for those people living in remote communities. As a matter of urgency, these efforts should include a strong focus on well-resourced prevention strategies targeting those communities where ATS use is emerging, in order to prevent uptake and costly related harms.