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Key findings

- Patterns of ecstasy use, such as frequency of use (how often users used ecstasy e.g. weekly, fortnight etc) and amounts used, have remained relatively stable among the regular ecstasy users involved in the EDRS.
- Price of ecstasy tablets was lower across six of the eight jurisdictions relative to 2008 (TAS and the NT remained the same). The price drop was between \$3 in VIC through to \$10 (NSW). This price drop did not appear associated with other ecstasy market characteristics of availability or purity, which remained relatively stable.
- With the exception of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, regular ecstasy users were not typically *regular* users (e.g. weekly or more often) of other drugs, with use usually occurring on a less than monthly basis. Nonetheless, a subgroup reported using some illicit drugs weekly or more often and engaging in risky ecstasy related practices such as bingeing.
- Regular ecstasy users reported the use of all three forms of methamphetamine (speed, base and ice/crystal). Nationally, there was a reported decrease in recent use of crystal methamphetamine from 24% in 2008 to 15% 2009. The decrease was reported across the majority of states and territories (except SA and the NT) and is the lowest level of ice/crystal use reported since the study began monitoring use in 2003. This was not reflected in marked changes in price, purity or availability of crystal methamphetamine. Speed and base use and market characteristics remained stable from figures reported in 2008.
- Among the national sample reports of cocaine use remained stable although a higher proportion reported use in NSW (51% in 2008 to 64% in 2009) and QLD (30% in 2008 to 55% in 2009) whilst frequency of use was stable and low in all jurisdictions. Use appears to remain concentrated in jurisdictions on the east coast of Australia.
- Regular ecstasy users reported the use of other drugs such as GHB and ketamine, however jurisdictional differences were evident. VIC had the highest proportion reporting use of GHB and ketamine in the preceding six months; however, use occurred infrequently among those who had used in the six months prior to interview (2 days use over the past six months).
- Other drugs used recently by this sample were LSD (34%, median days use 2), amyl nitrate (26%, median days use 4) and nitrous oxide (19%, median days use 4). Jurisdictional differences are evident.
- Regular (e.g. daily) use of tobacco and cannabis was common in this group. Patterns of alcohol use also indicated high rates of risky drinking. Alcohol after tobacco was used most frequently by this group, at twice weekly.

An overview of the 2009 EDRS: the regular ecstasy user survey findings

Introduction

The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) is the most comprehensive and detailed study of ecstasy and related drug markets in Australia. The EDRS uses a similar methodology to the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS). The EDRS monitors the price, purity and availability of 'ecstasy' (MDMA) and other related drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine, GHB and ketamine. It also examines trends in the use and harms of these drugs. The data collection includes: a) surveys with regular ecstasy users (REU); b) surveys with key experts who have contact with regular ecstasy users through the nature of their work; and c) the analysis of existing data sources that contain information on ecstasy and other drugs.

This bulletin contains a summary of the main findings from the REU survey component of the 2009 national EDRS, in which 756 participants were recruited (101 from the ACT, 100 each from NSW, VIC, TAS, SA and WA, 88 from QLD and 67 from the NT). This represents the seventh year in which the study was conducted nationally.

Regular ecstasy users were recruited as they are considered a sentinel group able to provide information on trends in ecstasy and related drug use and related harms. The information from the REU survey is therefore not representative of illicit drug use in the general population, and is not representative of other illicit drug users (e.g. in other geographical areas, occasional users, etc), but it is indicative of emerging trends that may warrant further monitoring and/or investigation.

Drug trends in this publication are cited by state/territory, although they represent trends in the capital city of each jurisdiction. Further details, including key expert and indicator data, will be published in the national and jurisdictional EDRS *Drug Trends* annual reports, which will be available through NDARC in early 2010. Previous years' findings are available in national and jurisdictional reports on the NDARC website, www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au (click on 'Drug Trends').

Notes on interpretation: 'Prevalence' data in this bulletin refer to the proportion of participants who had used the drug on at least one occasion in the last six months. 'Frequency' data refer to the number of days on which those participants had recently used the drug. 'Lifetime' refers to ever having used a drug. 'Recent' refers to the six months preceding interview. Due to the criteria used for participant inclusion in the study, all participants report lifetime and recent use of ecstasy. Furthermore, due to rounding of percentages, some columns may not add to 100%.

National Overview

Ecstasy

Nationally, ecstasy was used on a median of 12 days in the six months prior to interview (approximately once per fortnight; range 1-96 days). A third (30%) reported using ecstasy once per week or more often. There were no reports of daily ecstasy use. Participants reported using a median of two ecstasy tablets in a typical session of use. Two-fifths (38%) reported use of more than two tablets in a typical session.

Ecstasy was the drug most frequently cited as participants' drug of choice (i.e. preferred drug), nominated by approximately two-fifths (42%) of the national sample. This figure has gradually decreased over time (from 52% in 2003). In 2009, the second most frequently nominated drug of choice was cannabis (17%), followed by alcohol (11%). The proportion nominating cannabis as a favourite drug has remained relatively stable over time while the proportion nominating alcohol has become higher over the past few years (5% in 2005, 9% in 2006, 13% in 2007 and 15% in 2008).

The majority of participants that commented (n= 553, 82%) reported using other drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) with ecstasy, and a major proportion (n=541, 56%) reported that they usually used other drugs following use of ecstasy (i.e. during the 'come down'). Around one-third (34%) of the 2009 (31% in 2008) sample reported that they had binged on ecstasy and related drugs in the six months prior to interview (bingeing being defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep). As can be seen in Table 1, patterns of ecstasy use have remained largely stable across the seven years the EDRS has been conducted in all states and territories.

The price of ecstasy in 2009 was lower than 2008 in most jurisdictions, ranging from \$20 in NSW, SA and QLD to \$50 per tablet in the NT. For the ACT and WA this was the first time a price decrease was reported since monitoring began in 2003: other market characteristics of availability and purity remained comparable to 2008. Ecstasy was considered to be 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain by the majority of participants in all jurisdictions. Reports of current purity varied between 'medium' and 'fluctuates' across the country, with slightly greater reports of 'low' purity at a national level (14% in 2008; 24% in 2009).

Table 1: Patterns of ecstasy use in Australia, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Median days# | 12 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 52 | 51 | 51 | 45 | 39 | 37 | 42 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 51 | 43 | 49 | 49 | 44 | 32 | 36 |
| Use other drugs [^] with ecstasy (%) | 91 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 94 | 94 | 82 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 33 | 37 | 34 | 31 | 27 | 26 | 30 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

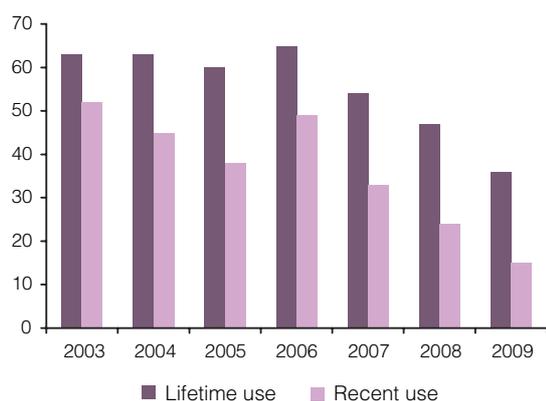
[^] also includes alcohol and tobacco # refers to ecstasy pills only

Methamphetamine

Use

The EDRS distinguishes between the three forms of methamphetamine – methamphetamine powder ('speed'); methamphetamine base ('base'); and crystalline methamphetamine, ('crystal' or 'ice'). Nationally, the proportion of participants reporting use of any form of methamphetamine was lower in 2009 (54%) than in 2006 (82%): at a disaggregated level there were less reports of recent use of the most potent form of methamphetamine 'ice/crystal', while recent use of speed and base remained stable (Figure 1). Lifetime use of ice/crystal was lower than in 2006 (see figure 1aa), in a sample that is stable in terms of its recruitment methods and demographics over time. Mean age of initiation of ice/crystal since 2006 appeared to be relatively similar across years (between 21 and 22 years of age) also. This decrease in lifetime use and recent use is in-line with the decrease reported in the Australian population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008; see *EDRS July Drug Trends Bulletin*).

Figure 1aa: Prevalence of lifetime and recent use of ice/crystal methamphetamine by REU, Australia, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Frequency of use remained low across all forms of methamphetamine, (speed a median of 3; base median of 2 and ice/crystal a median of 4 days respectively, i.e. approximately once a month or less). The median frequency of methamphetamine use (any form) also remained low at 4 days (6 days in 2008), ranging from a median of 2 days in the ACT and WA to a median of 7 days in SA. Similar to 2008 findings, daily use was reported by <1% (n=3 in 2009) of the national sample.

Price

The price of a gram of speed varied, with the median price ranging from \$47.50 in NSW to \$350 in SA. NSW reported the lowest median price for a 'point' (0.1g) of base (\$30), while TAS reported the highest median price (\$60). The median price for a point of ice/crystal was \$50 in all jurisdictions except in the NT (\$100).

Availability and Purity

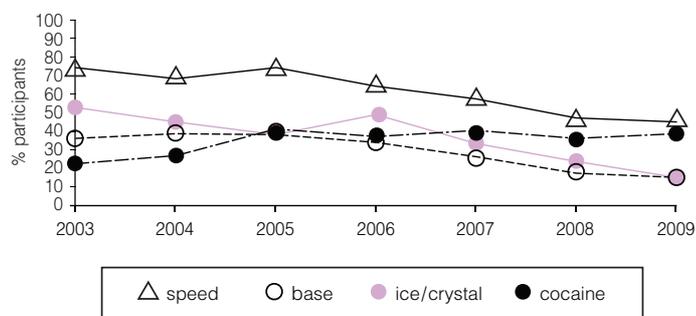
Nationally, there was very little difference in availability perceptions across all three forms of methamphetamine with all three forms being considered by the majority of reports to be 'easy' to 'very easy' to obtain. Reports of purity varied by jurisdiction with speed and base reported as 'medium' and ice/crystal as 'high' nationally. However, small numbers of participants reported on price, purity and availability, and this should be taken into account when interpreting findings.

Cocaine

Use of cocaine has fluctuated over the past six years, however relative stability has been reported since 2005, with 39% reporting recent use in 2009 (36% in 2008, Figure 1). In 2009 use of cocaine remained localized to NSW, ACT, VIC and QLD and estimates of use varied by jurisdiction, ranging from 20% in SA to 64% in NSW with increases in use noted in NSW and QLD. Cocaine was used on a median of 2 days

nationally, with little variation across the jurisdictions. The price per gram of cocaine ranged from \$300 in NSW, VIC, QLD and the ACT to \$375 in WA. As with methamphetamine, reports of availability and purity varied within and across jurisdictions. In some instances small numbers of participants reported on price, purity and availability, and this should be taken into account when interpreting findings.

Figure 1: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine and cocaine, by REU in the six months preceding interview, Australia, 2003-2009



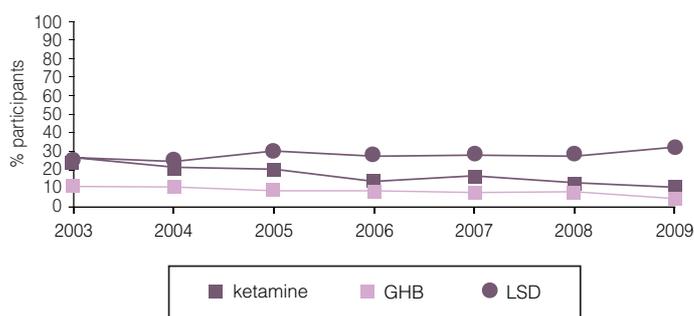
Source: EDRS REU interviews

Ketamine, GHB and LSD

The prevalence of recent GHB¹ use has remained low and stable, with 4% of the national sample reporting recent use in 2009. VIC had the highest proportion of recent use, with 10% reporting use in the past six months. NSW reported lower use from 2008, 24% to 6% (in 2009). LSD use has remained relatively stable over time, with 34% of the national sample reporting recent use in 2009; although jurisdictional differences are evident. Prevalence of recent ketamine use was stable, with 10% of the national sample reporting recent use (12% in 2008). For Ketamine, GHB and LSD, frequency of recent use remained minimal (a median of two days in the past six months). For further jurisdictional information on Ketamine, GHB and LSD visit www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au, click on 'Drug Trends', and see: 2009 Drug Trends Conference: 'Preliminary Findings of the 2009 IDRS and EDRS (29 September 2009)'.

¹ GHB occurs naturally in the body, but has been synthetically developed as an anaesthetic.

Figure 1a: Prevalence of use of GHB, Ketamine, LSD, by REU in the six months preceding interview, Australia, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Tobacco, cannabis and alcohol

Recent use of tobacco, cannabis and alcohol was reported by 80%, 82% and 98% respectively in 2009. Over half of the national sample (53%) reported daily tobacco use, 20% reported daily cannabis use, and 7% daily alcohol use (among those who reported using these drugs in the last 6 months). Use of alcohol in conjunction with ecstasy use in this group of REU is an issue that warrants further monitoring. An increasing trend of the nomination of alcohol as a 'drug of choice' has been noticed in this group of participants over the past seven years. Alcohol was nominated by 3% of the national sample as the 'drug of choice' in 2003, rose to 17% in 2008 overtaking cannabis in second place, and in 2009 is in third place at 11% of the national sample. Alcohol is the drug nominated as most typically used with ecstasy (by 70% of those that commented, n=553), followed by tobacco (49%) and cannabis (36%) Alcohol is also the drug most reported (by 76% of the national sample) after ecstasy (95%) to be used in a binge² session.

Jurisdictional Overviews

The following section provides the price, availability and purity of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by jurisdiction, as well as providing prevalence of the use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, GHB, LSD and MDA in the six months preceding interview. Price, availability and purity data are not presented for ketamine, GHB, LSD and MDA due to the small numbers who are able to comment on these drugs. These data will be found in individual state and territory reports when published.

² bingeing is defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

NSW (Sydney)

Use

Table 2: Patterns of ecstasy use in NSW, 2003-2009

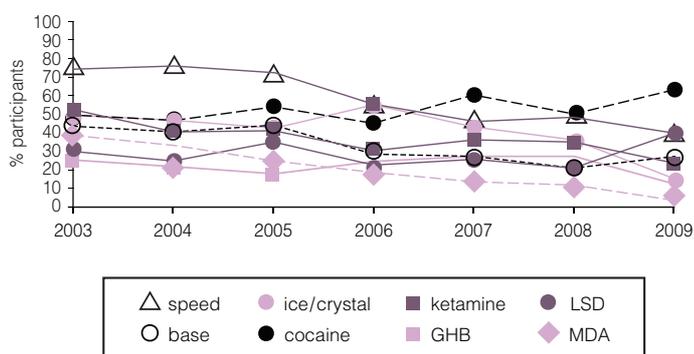
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Median days# | 12 | 20 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 14 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2.5 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 55 | 59 | 38 | 44 | 38 | 29 | 44 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 37 | 34 | 43 | 48 | 42 | 30 | 34 |
| Use other drugs [^] with ecstasy (%) | 89 | 94 | 97 | 85 | 81 | 83 | 84 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 22 | 42 | 40 | 36 | 31 | 19 | 24 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

[^] also includes alcohol and tobacco # refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 2: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, GHB, LSD and MDA by REU in the six months preceding interview, NSW, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Price

Table 3: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, NSW 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$30 | \$20 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$20* | - |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$50 | \$47.50 |
| Base (point) | \$42.5* | \$30* |
| Base (gram) | \$180* | \$100* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50 | \$50* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$300* | - |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$300 | \$300 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 4: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, NSW, 2009*

| | Ecstasy (%) n=100 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=35 |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=18 | Base n=12 | Ice/crystal n=9^ | |
| Availability | | | | | |
| Very easy | 52 | 33 | 25 | 44 | 20 |
| Easy | 44 | 39 | 42 | 11 | 49 |
| Difficult | 4 | 28 | 25 | 44 | 29 |
| Very difficult | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 3 |
| Purity | n=99 | n=18 | n=12 | n=9^ | n=34 |
| Low | 37 | 17 | 17 | 56 | 21 |
| Medium | 31 | 50 | 42 | 0 | 32 |
| High | 9 | 28 | 42 | 44 | 32 |
| Fluctuates | 22 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 15 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

^ note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

ACT (Canberra)

Use

Table 5: Patterns of ecstasy use in the ACT, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 12 | 14 | 12.5 | 16 | 12 | 18 | 13 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 2 | 1.75 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 56 | 47 | 56 | 50 | 32 | 24 | 32 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 46 | 34 | 43 | 49 | 50 | 49 | 32 |
| Use other drugs^ with ecstasy (%) | 88 | 96 | 91 | 90 | 97 | 98 | n=53 47 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 21 | 38 | 33 | 38 | 28 | 38 | 37 |

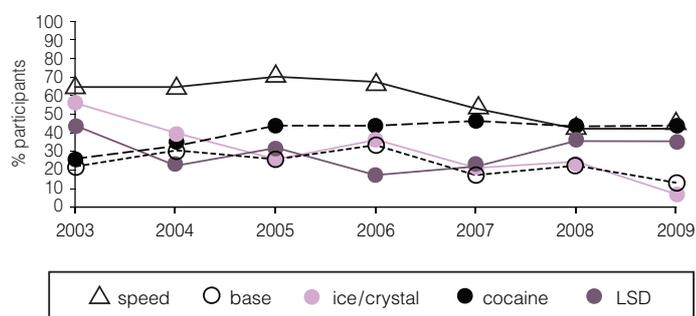
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

^ also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 3: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, and LSD by REU in the six months preceding interview, ACT, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Note: Numbers for GHB and MDA are small and relatively stable, therefore not displayed in this figure.

Price

Table 6: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, ACT 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$30 | \$25 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$30 | \$30* |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$225 | \$200 |
| Base (point) | \$30 | \$40* |
| Base (gram) | \$250* | \$150* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50 | \$50* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$400* | \$300* |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$300 | 300 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 7: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, ACT, 2009

| | Ecstasy (%) n=100 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=25 |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=32 | Base n=7 [^] | Ice/crystal n=6 [^] | |
| Availability | | | | | |
| Very easy | 44 | 16 | 29 | 0 | 8 |
| Easy | 50 | 53 | 14 | 33 | 44 |
| Difficult | 6 | 28 | 57 | 67 | 44 |
| Very difficult | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Purity | n=99 | n=29 | n=6[^] | n=6[^] | n=21 |
| Low | 27 | 28 | 50 | 50 | 24 |
| Medium | 30 | 45 | 33 | 17 | 29 |
| High | 16 | 21 | 17 | 33 | 38 |
| Fluctuates | 26 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 10 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

[^] note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

VIC (Melbourne)

Use

Table 8: Patterns of ecstasy use in VIC, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 15 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 44 | 47 | 45 | 32 | 29 | 39 | 42 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 60 | 47 | 53 | 49 | 51 | 39 | 37 |
| Use other drugs [^] with ecstasy (%) | 98 | 94 | 97 | 97 | 95 | 98 | n=93 96 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 36 | 36 | 24 | 30 | 30 | 38 | 31 |

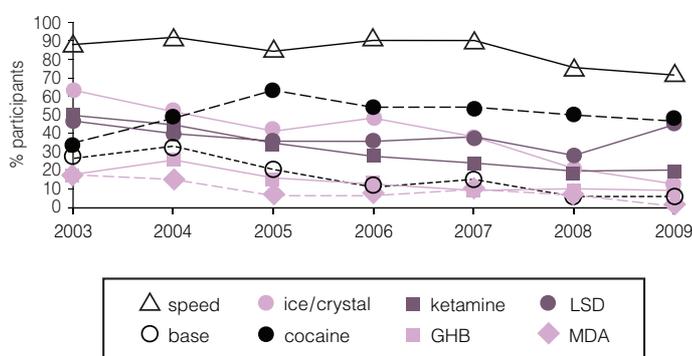
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

[^] also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 4: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, GHB, LSD and MDA by REU in the six months preceding interview, VIC, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Price

Table 9: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, VIC 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|---------|--------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$28 | \$25 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$50* | \$25* |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$200 | \$190 |
| Base (point) | \$30* | - |
| Base (gram) | \$150* | \$300* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50* | \$50* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$237.5 | \$450* |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$300 | \$300 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 10: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, VIC, 2009

| | Ecstasy (%) n=100 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=19 |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=35 | Base n=1^ | Ice/crystal n=10 | |
| Availability | | | | | |
| Very easy | 43 | 43 | 0 | 10 | 26 |
| Easy | 33 | 34 | 100 | 30 | 42 |
| Difficult | 19 | 23 | 0 | 50 | 32 |
| Very difficult | 5 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Purity | n=98 | n=35 | n=1^ | n=9^ | n=19 |
| Low | 25 | 29 | 0 | 33 | 42 |
| Medium | 32 | 49 | 100 | 44 | 21 |
| High | 9 | 11 | 0 | 22 | 26 |
| Fluctuates | 35 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 11 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

^ note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

TAS (Hobart)

Use

Table 11: Patterns of ecstasy use in TAS, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 14 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 54 | 58 | 52 | 59 | 44 | 46 | 56 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 45 | 35 | 39 | 46 | 38 | 36 | 27 |
| Use other drugs^ with ecstasy (%) | 98 | 99 | 99 | 94 | 96 | 95 | n=87 95 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 38 | 24 | 28 | 20 | 23 | 17 | 17 |

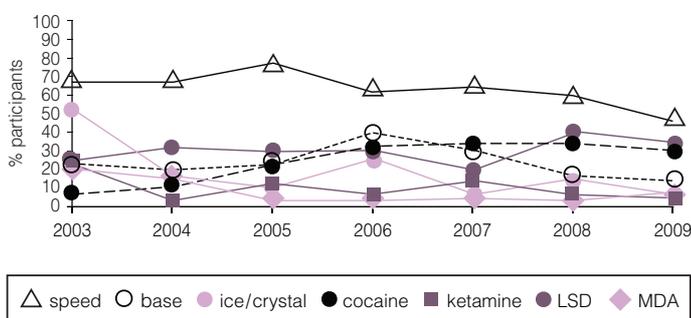
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

^ also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 5: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine and LSD by REU in the six months preceding interview, TAS, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Note: Numbers for GHB are small and relatively stable, therefore not displayed in this figure.

Price

Table 12: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, TAS 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$35 | \$35 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$40 | \$40 |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$300 | \$255 |
| Base (point) | \$40* | \$60^ |
| Base (gram) | \$300* | \$400^ |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$40* | \$50^ |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$300* | \$450^ |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$350 | \$300* |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 13: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, TAS, 2009

| Availability | Ecstasy (%) n=99 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=12 |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=40 | Base n=11 | Ice/crystal n=5^ | |
| Very easy | 21 | 20 | 9 | 20 | 0 |
| Easy | 62 | 48 | 73 | 40 | 25 |
| Difficult | 17 | 33 | 18 | 40 | 50 |
| Very difficult | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Purity | n=98 | n=32 | n=11 | n=5^ | n=12 |
| Low | 25 | 13 | 27 | 20 | 50 |
| Medium | 32 | 63 | 46 | 60 | 33 |
| High | 9 | 16 | 27 | 20 | 17 |
| Fluctuates | 35 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

^ note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

SA (Adelaide)

Use

Table 14: Patterns of ecstasy use in SA, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 12 | 12 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 15 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 67 | 56 | 49 | 54 | 41 | 49 | 37 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 44 | 53 | 58 | 57 | 59 | 30 | 27 |
| Use other drugs^ with ecstasy (%) | 93 | 94 | 87 | 93 | 95 | 99 | n=95 77 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 29 | 36 | 38 | 25 | 27 | 35 | 43 |

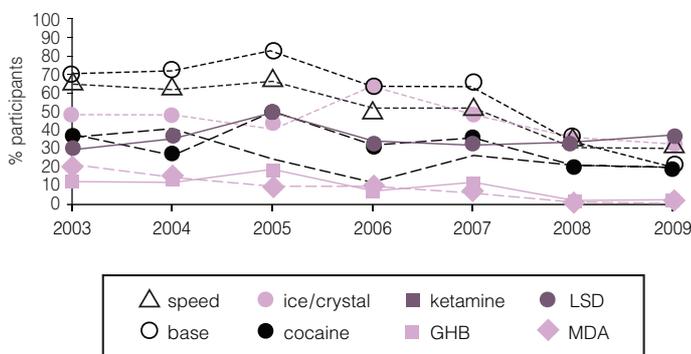
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

^ also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 6: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, GHB, LSD and MDA by REU in the six months preceding interview, SA, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Price

Table 15: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, SA 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$25 | \$20 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$50* | \$40 |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$200* | \$350* |
| Base (point) | \$50 | \$50* |
| Base (gram) | [no purchases reported] | \$200* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50 | \$50* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$250* | \$400* |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$375 | \$350^A |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 16: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, SA, 2009

| | Ecstasy (%) n=100 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=3^A |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=21 | Base n=10 | Ice/crystal n=21 | |
| Availability | | | | | |
| Very easy | 51 | 48 | 30 | 48 | 0 |
| Easy | 36 | 52 | 50 | 38 | 67 |
| Difficult | 12 | 0 | 20 | 14 | 33 |
| Very difficult | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Purity | n=97 | n=20 | n=10 | n=22 | n=4^A |
| Low | 26 | 10 | 20 | 9 | 50 |
| Medium | 33 | 45 | 50 | 41 | 0 |
| High | 17 | 25 | 10 | 46 | 25 |
| Fluctuates | 25 | 20 | 20 | 5 | 25 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

^ note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

WA (Perth)

Use

Table 17: Patterns of ecstasy use in WA, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 52 | 44 | 51 | 41 | 46 | 38 | 42 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 62 | 50 | 57 | 54 | 35 | 22 | 42 |
| Use other drugs^ with ecstasy (%) | 85 | 86 | 90 | 94 | 93 | 97 | n=74 73 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 25 | 21 | 29 | 35 | 27 | 10 | 29 |

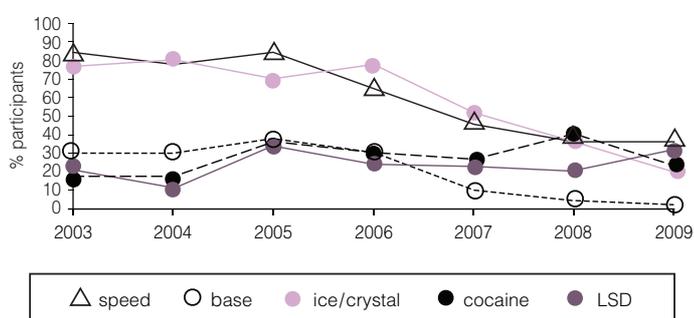
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

^ also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 7: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine and LSD by REU in the six months preceding interview, WA, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Note: Numbers for Ketamine, GHB and MDA are small and relatively stable, therefore not displayed in this figure.

Price

Table 18: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, WA 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$40 | \$35 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$50* | \$50 |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$100 | \$275 |
| Base (point) | \$50* | \$50* |
| Base (gram) | [no purchases reported] | \$400* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50 | \$50* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$425* | \$400* |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$325* | \$375* |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 19: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, WA, 2009

| Availability | Ecstasy (%) n=98 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=11 |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=18 | Base n=3 [^] | Ice/crystal n=11 | |
| Very easy | 61 | 33 | 66 | 46 | 27 |
| Easy | 35 | 56 | 0 | 36 | 27 |
| Difficult | 4 | 6 | 33 | 18 | 27 |
| Very difficult | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Purity | n=100 | n=18 | n=3 [^] | n=11 | n=10 |
| Low | 10 | 50 | 67 | 55 | 50 |
| Medium | 35 | 33 | 33 | 9 | 10 |
| High | 13 | 11 | 0 | 18 | 20 |
| Fluctuates | 42 | 6 | 0 | 18 | 20 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

[^] note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

NT (Darwin)

Use

Table 20: Patterns of ecstasy use in NT, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 12 | 16 | 24 | 12 | 15 | 12 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1 | 1.75 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 36 | 47 | 61 | 37 | 37 | 44 | 49 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 69 | 54 | 57 | 47 | 51 | 22 | 42 |
| Use other drugs [^] with ecstasy (%) | 92 | 89 | 96 | 98 | 100 | 86 | n=31 77 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 19 | 39 | 52 | 33 | 30 | 20 | 22 |

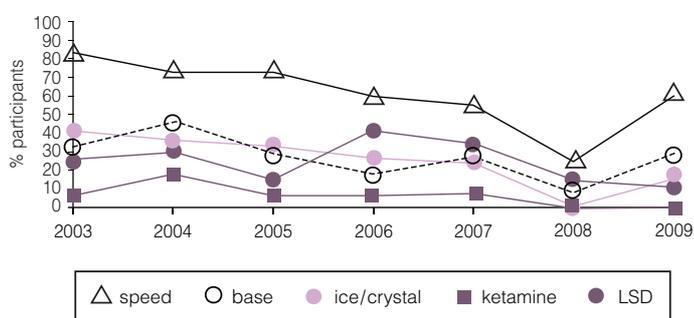
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

[^] also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 8: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, ketamine, and LSD by REU in the six months preceding interview, NT, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Note: Numbers for Cocaine, GHB and MDA are small and relatively stable, therefore not displayed in this figure.

Price

Table 21: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, NT 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$50 | \$50 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | [no purchases reported] | \$50 |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$300* | \$300 |
| Base (point) | [no purchases reported] | \$50* |
| Base (gram) | \$400* | \$400* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50* | \$100* |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | [no purchases reported] | [no purchases reported] |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$450* | \$325* |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting $n < 10$)

Purity and Availability

Table 22: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, NT, 2009

| Availability | Ecstasy (%) n=65 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=5 [^] |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=23 | Base n=6 [^] | Ice/crystal n=5 [^] | |
| Very easy | 32 | 13 | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Easy | 59 | 83 | 50 | 40 | 0 |
| Difficult | 9 | 4 | 50 | 40 | 80 |
| Very difficult | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| Purity | n=64 | n=23 | n=6[^] | n=5[^] | n=5[^] |
| Low | 11 | 30 | 50 | 20 | 60 |
| Medium | 73 | 57 | 50 | 20 | 0 |
| High | 8 | 9 | 0 | 60 | 40 |
| Fluctuates | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

* Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

[^] note small numbers $n < 10$ interpret results with caution

QLD (Brisbane)

Use

Table 23: Patterns of ecstasy use in QLD, 2003-2009

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| Median days# | 24 | 24 | 17 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Median tablets used in 'average' use session | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ecstasy favourite drug (%) | 53 | 47 | 56 | 40 | 45 | 31 | 39 |
| Recently binged on stimulant drugs* (%) | 45 | 44 | 44 | 47 | 28 | 22 | 35 |
| Use other drugs [^] with ecstasy (%) | 85 | 90 | 92 | 95 | 96 | 94 | n=32 97 |
| Use ecstasy weekly or more # (%) | 60 | 53 | 34 | 30 | 24 | 23 | 31 |

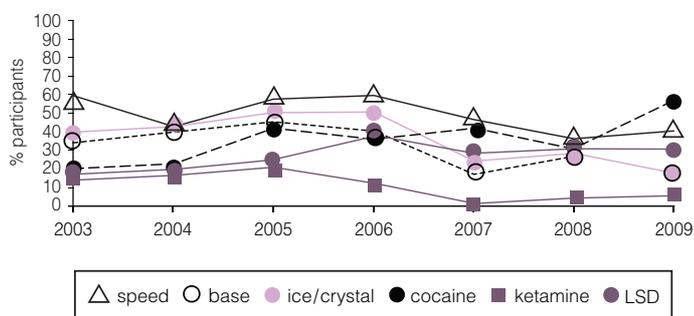
Source: EDRS REU interviews

* bingeing defined as using the drug on a continuous basis for more than 48 hours without sleep.

[^] also includes alcohol and tobacco

refers to ecstasy pills only

Figure 9: Prevalence of use of methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine and LSD by REU in the six months preceding interview, QLD, 2003-2009



Source: EDRS REU interviews

Note: Numbers for GHB and MDA are small and relatively stable, therefore not displayed in this figure.

Price

Table 24: Median price of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine, QLD 2008-2009

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Ecstasy | | |
| Ecstasy (tablet) | \$25 | \$20 |
| Methamphetamine | | |
| Speed powder (point) | \$25* | \$37.50 |
| Speed powder (gram) | \$165 | \$180 |
| Base (point) | \$25 | \$55* |
| Base (gram) | \$200* | \$200* |
| Ice/crystal (point) | \$50 | \$50 |
| Ice/crystal (gram) | \$400* | \$400* |
| Cocaine | | |
| Cocaine (gram) | \$300 | \$300 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

*Interpret with caution (small numbers commenting n<10)

Purity and Availability

Table 25: Perceptions of current availability and purity/potency of ecstasy, methamphetamine and cocaine by REU who commented, QLD, 2009

| Availability | Ecstasy (%) n=84 | Methamphetamine (%) | | | Cocaine (%) n=37 |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Speed powder n=25 | Base n=15 | Ice/crystal n=17 | |
| Very easy | 36 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 19 |
| Easy | 49 | 48 | 33 | 47 | 46 |
| Difficult | 14 | 32 | 47 | 18 | 30 |
| Very difficult | 1 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 5 |
| Purity | n=84 | n=24 | n=13 | n=15 | n=36 |
| Low | 41 | 29 | 8 | 20 | 36 |
| Medium | 19 | 38 | 31 | 20 | 36 |
| High | 12 | 29 | 39 | 53 | 28 |
| Fluctuates | 29 | 4 | 23 | 7 | 0 |

Source: EDRS REU interviews

Excludes participants who did not respond to the survey item and those who reported that they did not know

^ note small numbers n<10 interpret results with caution

Conclusions

- The ecstasy market experienced a price decrease of between \$3-\$10 across all jurisdictions in 2009 except TAS and NT where the price remained stable. In certain states this was the first price decrease reported since monitoring of the ecstasy market began in 2003. Other market characteristics related to ecstasy remained relatively stable, with the majority of respondents perceiving ecstasy as being either 'very easy' or 'easy' to obtain, and the purity being perceived as 'medium' to 'fluctuates'.
- A decrease was observed in the prevalence of use of ice/crystal methamphetamine compared to 2008. However, participants continued to report all three forms of methamphetamine as readily available, and results did not suggest that there had been a large decrease in purity. Nationally, among those who had used, methamphetamine was used on an average of approximately once per month or less in the six months prior to interview.
- At the national level there was stability in terms of use in the cocaine market, however NSW and QLD reported increases. Market characteristics in NSW and QLD did provide some basis for the increase in use. In NSW reports of purity perceptions as 'high' increased from 20% in 2008 to 32% in 2009 and in QLD availability reports of cocaine increased ('easy to very easy') from 35% in 2008 to 55% in 2009 and purity reports of 'high' increased from 11% in 2008 to 28% in 2009. However, frequency of use remained low at 2 days across most states and 3 days in NSW (equating to less than monthly use). As previous research has suggested (Shearer et al, 2005), cocaine was reported to be less difficult to obtain in large, eastern jurisdictions compared with western states and territories. Cocaine may be seen as a 'special occasion' drug, and the degree of difficulty in obtaining it as well as the price may have been seen as a barrier by some to more frequent use.
- While the markets for drugs such as GHB and ketamine may be smaller when compared to those for drugs such as methamphetamine, regular ecstasy users do report the use of these drugs. Patterns of use for drugs such as GHB, ketamine, LSD, amyl nitrate and nitrous oxide reflect infrequent use (median was approximately two days and four days equating to less than monthly use). Again, jurisdictional differences were evident for these drugs. VIC had the highest proportion of participants reporting recent use of GHB, with a considerable drop reported in GHB use in NSW (24% in 2008 to 6% in 2009) for the preceding six months, whereas no respondents in the NT had used it in the six months prior to interview.
- Tobacco, alcohol and cannabis use is common in this group and remain issues of concern, with high rates of daily and/or heavy use. Alcohol in particular, considering the increase in preference seen over time in this group (favourite or preferred drug of choice) and reported use in risky ecstasy related behaviours (such as bingeing) should continue to be monitored.

Participating researchers and research centres

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References

Shearer et al. (2005). *Characteristics and dynamics of cocaine supply and demand in Sydney and Melbourne*. NDLERF Monograph 14. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales.