

Ice now top indigenous drug, rehab chief says

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THE head of an Aboriginal rehab facility says alcohol, which has always been the top-presenting drug, has been replaced by amphetamines, mainly ice, for the first time.

The chief executive of The Glen on the NSW central coast, Joe Coyte, told *The Australian* the latest statistics had shocked and disturbed him.

The primary drugs of choice are amphetamines, at 58 per cent, and cannabis, at 25 per cent. Just one of the new admissions identified alcohol as the primary drug of choice.

“The stats don’t lie,” Mr Coyte told *The Australian*. “Ice use is on the increase and people using ice are getting into trouble and needing rehab services like ours at an alarming rate.

“The reason is heavily related to the fact it is cheap and easy to get hold of.

“It is a damaging drug which doesn’t allow users much time before it really takes hold.”

Mr Coyte said his clients came from all over NSW and were mainly Aboriginal.

He said alcohol had always been the No 1 presenting drug (when people were asked about their primary drug of concern) but amphetamines (mainly ice) were taking over.

The average age of new clients this month was 30.9 years old.

“The increase in our clients presenting as ice users has made a difference to the treatment we offer,” Mr Coyte said.

“We are constantly reviewing our program and the way we deliver services to fit in with our clients’ needs.

“A common problem with people coming in that have been heavy ice users is that they take a while to settle down, and managing their needs with the needs of the rest of our clients is a hard balancing act at times.

“It is also important to acknowledge that, due to the potency of the drugs used, some of these guys can take months before their head starts to clear.

“Treatment needs to be tailored to the client’s needs, as the first few months in treatment can simply allow the fog to lift and that’s when you get an opportunity to work on empowering the client to make some real change in their own life.”

West Australian senator Dean Smith told *The Australian* he had written to the Senate community affairs references committee chairwoman Rachel Siewert to propose an inquiry into ice in regional and remote communities.

He previously told the Senate: “In many respects, the impact of meth is felt even more keenly in regional communities than in our cities, because these regional areas in many cases do not have comparable law-enforcement resources, or treatment options for drug addiction that may be available to those in more populated areas.”

Senator Smith quoted indigenous leader Marcia Langton, who has done extensive work in West Australian indigenous communities along with Andrew Forrest. Professor Langton told *The Australian*: “We heard many reports of ice, or methamphetamines, in remote communities ... there is a youth epidemic of amphetamine use and there are organised drug-dealing syndicates that have a network of distributors in Aboriginal communities who market drugs.