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**Abstract** | Fifty-nine police detainees and 84 Victoria Police members predicted what the state of the Victorian illicit drug market would be at the start of 2018. Methamphetamine was predicted to be the most popular illicit drug and the one causing the most harm in 2018. Increases in clandestine laboratories, youth and organised crime involvement, government and law enforcement attention and education were predicted to impact on the methamphetamine market. The ecstasy market was predicted to grow by 2018, driven by demand for it as a party drug. Cocaine was predicted to increase in price and purity by 2018. These changes were predicted to be driven by increased seizures and organised crime involvement, which may increase the number of attempted importations. Fluctuations in cannabis availability, price and purity were predicted, driven by increased cultivation and organised crime involvement in the market. The heroin market was predicted to be stable.

## Predictions on future Victorian illicit drug market influences

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### Background

In 2016, Victoria Police (VicPol) commissioned the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to undertake research to examine the current Victorian illicit drug market and provide a forecast of the illicit drug market at the start of 2018. Data were collected via two survey rounds.

Fifty-nine detainees were interviewed at a metropolitan Melbourne police station using the AIC's Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program methodology (see Coghlan et al. 2015). Detainees were recruited and interviewed over two separate data collection periods in July (n=34) and August (n=25) 2016. The people interviewed at the metropolitan Melbourne police station are referred to in this bulletin as detainees for ease of reference. It is acknowledged that detainees may or may not have ultimately been charged and convicted. All detainees present during data collection were eligible to participate. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Eighty-four VicPol members completed the round one survey and 50 of those VicPol members also completed the round two survey.

This statistical bulletin provides a summary of detainees' and VicPol members' predictions about the Victorian illicit drug market at the start of 2018. This includes participants' forecasts of trends such as the drug causing the most harm at the start of 2018; and the availability, price and purity of methamphetamine, heroin, ecstasy, cocaine and cannabis. VicPol members also reported the likelihood and impact of specific market factors. The most common responses are presented. The number of respondents differs for each illicit drug market, as participants commented only on the markets of which they had knowledge.

Availability of an illicit drug was measured on a scale from impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Price was measured as the cost per unit. Purity was measured as a percentage and then classed by AIC researchers into categories of low (<29%), medium (30–69%), and high (70–100%). Likelihood of a market event was measured on a scale from almost impossible to almost certain. Impact of the event on the market was measured on a scale from low to high.

## Illicit drug priority rankings

Both VicPol members and detainees were asked to rank illicit drug types in the order in which the Victorian government should be focusing its attention or money at the start of 2018 (where 1 is the highest priority and 5 the lowest). Table 1 outlines the most common response for each rank. VicPol members and detainees both reported that methamphetamine would be the most popular drug at the start of 2018 (93% and 81%, respectively) and the drug causing the most harm (97% and 85%, respectively).

Ranking	VicPol members	Detainees
1	Methamphetamine	Methamphetamine
2	Heroin	Heroin
3	Ecstasy	Cocaine
4	Cocaine	Ecstasy
5	Cannabis	Cannabis

a: Participants were asked to provide a priority ranking for methamphetamine, heroin, ecstasy, cannabis and cocaine; alcohol, tobacco and new psychoactive substances were not considered

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine was ranked as the number one illicit drug priority for the Victorian Government in 2018 by both VicPol members and detainees. One VicPol member stated: ‘[it’s] everywhere. It has permeated every level of society. It is highly addictive. This won’t change.’ Another VicPol member stated, ‘Over the next two years we may start seeing different forms of ice and even the progression of how it is made, which may increase the harmful nature of the drug.’

Current methamphetamine market conditions were predicted to continue relatively unchanged until the start of 2018 (see Table 2). VicPol members predicted a slight increase in the price of methamphetamine per point (approximately 0.1 grams) from \$50 or less and a slight decrease in availability, starting from ‘very easy to obtain’.

	Current market		2018 predictions		Change	
	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members
<b>Availability</b>	Very easy	Very easy	Very easy	Easy/ Very easy	No change	Slight decrease
<b>Purity</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	No change	No change
<b>Price</b>	\$50 or less per point	\$50 or less per point	\$50 or less per point	\$50 or less/\$51–59 per point	No change	Slight increase

Note: availability was measured on a scale of impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Purity was measured on a scale of low (<29 percent), medium (30–69%) and high (70–100%). Price was measured as cost per point

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

### Predicted market influences

VicPol members predicted it was ‘likely’ the number of clandestine laboratories would increase by the start of 2018 and have a ‘high’ impact on the market (see Table 3). VicPol members provided the following reasons: ‘As demand increases, which I would expect to be the case, more labs would be built to fuel the demand,’ and, ‘Due to internet and other elements, more people will attempt to get into the industry.’ Another said, ‘More and more are being discovered each year. The more public awareness on the matter, the more labs will be located as people know what to report.’

VicPol members also predicted it was ‘likely’ that young people and organised crime syndicates would have increased involvement in the Victorian methamphetamine market by the start of 2018 (see Tables 4 and 5). Both scenarios were predicted to have a ‘high’ impact. Reasoning provided for the predictions were that they reflected a continuation of current trends (organised crime, n=6; youth, n=6).

VicPol members predicted it was ‘likely’ that government and law enforcement agencies would increase their focus on the methamphetamine market by the start of 2018 (see Table 6). This is predicted to have a ‘medium’ to ‘high’ impact. One VicPol member reasoned, ‘Law will keep increasing pressure.’ Another VicPol member stated, ‘[Law enforcement agencies] are always looking to increase pressure and disruption on drug markets and methylamphetamine is the most prevalent and well known at the moment and therefore the pressure is on to reduce the problem.’ Implementation of strategies to educate the community was also predicted to be ‘likely’ and to have a ‘medium’ to ‘high’ impact (see Table 7).

**Table 3: Police officers' prediction: There will be an increase in the number of clandestine labs producing methamphetamine by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	1	2
Unlikely	2	4
As likely as not	11	22
Likely	27	54
Almost certain	8	16
Don't know/Not answered	1	2
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	5	10
Medium	16	32
High	22	44
Don't know/Not answered	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 4: Police officers' prediction: More young people will be involved in the supply of methamphetamine by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	1	2
As likely as not	11	22
Likely	30	60
Almost certain	8	16
Don't know/Not answered	0	
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	2	4
Medium	15	30
High	27	54
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 5: Police officers' prediction: There will be an increase in the involvement of organised crime networks in the Australian methamphetamine market by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	0	0
As likely as not	8	16
Likely	23	46
Almost certain	18	36
Don't know/Not answered	1	2
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	0	0
Medium	13	26
High	32	64
Don't know/Not answered	5	10
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 6: Police officers' prediction: The government and law enforcement agencies will increase their focus on disrupting the methamphetamine market by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	6	12
As likely as not	7	14
Likely	28	56
Almost certain	9	18
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	7	14
Medium	20	40
High	19	38
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 7: Police officers' prediction: Strategies will be implemented to educate the community about methamphetamine by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	4	8
As likely as not	11	22
Likely	21	42
Almost certain	14	28
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	11	22
Medium	19	38
High	16	32
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Heroin

VicPol members and detainees ranked heroin as the second highest priority illicit drug for the Victorian Government in 2018. Reasons provided by VicPol members centred on harms to the user (n=24) and heroin use as a driver of crime (n=17). Comments included: ‘Still harmful and addictive, hard to kick,’ ‘Poses a significant health risk to users,’ ‘Crime driver,’ and, ‘Heavy addictive drug, drives Burglary, Thefts...crime up for people to fund habit.’ Detainees also focused on harms to the user (n=6) and the impact on crime (n=3), saying the drug ‘ruins lives’, ‘because of what [I] see in the community—crime they are committing to pay for it.’

**Table 8: Summary of current heroin market and 2018 predictions**

	Current market		2018 predictions		Change	
	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members
<b>Availability</b>	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	No change	No change
<b>Purity</b>	Low/ Medium/ High	Low	Medium	Low	Unable to determine	No change
<b>Price</b>	\$99 or less per point	\$99 or less per point	\$99 or less per point	\$99 or less per point	No change	No change

Note: Availability was measured on a scale of impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Purity was measured on a scale of low (<29%), medium (30–69%) and high (70–100%). Price was measured as cost per point

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

The heroin market was predicted by both VicPol members and detainees to be stable between 2016 and the start of 2018 (see Table 8). However, four VicPol members noted recent instability in the market, stating, ‘[Dealers] seem to be pushing the resurgence of heroin and moving away from meth,’ and that they have ‘of late seen a slight increase’.

### Predicted market influences

No heroin market influences were endorsed as ‘likely’ (see Tables 9–12). VicPol members considered it ‘as likely as not’ that there would be more heroin users, that the purity of heroin would increase and that heroin use would remain at current low levels at the start of 2018. VicPol members noted: ‘Increases in purity have many health consequences including overdoses.’

In line with comments from the national study (see Statistical Bulletin 05), VicPol members predicted that it was unlikely that methamphetamine users would switch to heroin by the start of 2018. As one VicPol member stated, ‘There will be some users converting to heroin but not a huge amount.’ Another stated, ‘Once [they] start on meth, that’s what they will be addicted to and can’t go back.’ A third VicPol member noted, ‘Heroin is a depressant and methamphetamines type drugs are stimulants. Therefore, it is not likely that many methamphetamine users will be switching to heroin.’

**Table 9: Police officers' prediction: There will be more heroin users by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	12	24
As likely as not	23	46
Likely	10	20
Almost certain	2	4
Don't know/Not answered	3	6
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	11	22
Medium	20	40
High	12	24
Don't know/Not answered	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 10: Police officers' prediction: The purity of heroin will increase by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	14	28
As likely as not	23	46
Likely	10	20
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	3	6
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	22	44
High	9	18
Don't know/Not answered	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]



**Table 11: Police officers' prediction: Heroin use will remain at the current low level at the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	2	4
Unlikely	12	24
As likely as not	22	44
Likely	11	22
Almost certain	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	2	4
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	25	50
High	7	14
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 12: Police officers' prediction: Methamphetamine users will switch to heroin by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	2	4
Unlikely	31	62
As likely as not	8	16
Likely	6	12
Almost certain	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	2	4
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	19	38
Medium	19	38
High	6	12
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Ecstasy

VicPol members ranked ecstasy as the third highest priority illicit drug for the Victorian Government at the start of 2018, while detainees rated it as the fourth priority. VicPol members focused on the unknown composition of tablets purporting to be ecstasy and associated harms (n=14), the attractiveness of ecstasy to young people (n=16), and its association with recreational use and the party scene (n=19). Detainee comments mirrored those of VicPol members (unknown composition, n=6; party drug, n=5). They said: ‘Don’t know what you’re going to get—lucky dip,’ and, ‘Party enhancer—nothing else.’ The ecstasy market was predicted to experience a decrease in availability and a slight increase in purity by the start of 2018 (see Table 13). Only two police detainees provided predictions on the ecstasy market. Market changes were predicted to be driven by the manufacture and importation of ecstasy. One VicPol member stated, ‘Changes in availability of chemicals to manufacture ecstasy will dictate purity as well as knowledge of manufacture as well as demand.’

**Table 13: Summary of current ecstasy market and 2018 predictions**

	Current market		2018 predictions		Change	
	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members
<b>Availability</b>	Very easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Decrease	No change
<b>Purity</b>	High	Medium/ Low	High/Medium	Medium	Unable to determine <sup>a</sup>	Slight increase
<b>Price</b>	\$11–19 per pill	\$20–29 per pill	\$10 or less/ \$11–19 per pill	\$20–29 per pill	Unable to determine <sup>a</sup>	No change

a: Unable to determine due to only two detainees providing predictions that presented differing views

Note: availability was measured on a scale ranging from impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Purity was measured on a scale of low (<29%), medium (30–69%) and high (70–100%). Price was measured as cost per pill

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

### Predicted market influences

VicPol members predicted that it was ‘likely’ that the ecstasy market would grow by the start of 2018 and that this growth would have a ‘medium’ impact on the market (see Table 14). One VicPol member reasoned, ‘The market will continue to prosper whilst there are people who attend night clubs and parties who wish to use the product. Many perceive it as a better alternative to alcohol.’ Another VicPol member stated, ‘The party market will control the demand.’ VicPol members predicted it was ‘unlikely’ and ‘as likely as not’ that the price of ecstasy would decrease by the start of 2018 (see Table 15). Were either of these events to occur, it was predicted that they would have a ‘medium’ impact on the market. VicPol members stated it was ‘unlikely’ that the ecstasy market would be in decline by the start of 2018 (see Table 16). One VicPol member stated, ‘Still have those wishing to use it, especially those in the “party” lifestyle.’ It was also predicted to be ‘unlikely’ that the availability of ecstasy would decrease by the start of 2018 (see Table 17). Two VicPol members noted that this was dependent on demand. Another VicPol member stated, ‘Importation of raw ingredients or finished product will likely increase.’

**Table 14: Police officers' prediction: The ecstasy market will grow by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	9	18
As likely as not	16	32
Likely	20	40
Almost certain	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	10	20
Medium	27	54
High	5	10
Don't know/Not answered	8	16
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 15: Police officers' prediction: There will be a decrease in the price of ecstasy by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	19	38
As likely as not	18	36
Likely	9	18
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	14	28
Medium	23	46
High	5	10
Don't know/Not answered	8	16
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 16: Police officers' prediction: The ecstasy market will be in decline by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	3	6
Unlikely	33	66
As likely as not	9	18
Likely	1	2
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	15	30
Medium	24	48
High	4	8
Don't know/Not answered	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 17: Police officers' prediction: The availability of ecstasy will decrease by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	1	2
Unlikely	35	70
As likely as not	9	18
Likely	1	2
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	25	50
High	5	10
Don't know/Not answered	8	16
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Cocaine

Detainees ranked cocaine as the third highest priority for the Victorian Government at the start of 2018 while VicPol members rated it fourth. Twenty-four VicPol members justified the ranking based on the price of cocaine: ‘Priced highly so does not have as greater effect on property and violent crime as the other listed drugs,’ and, ‘Seen as an expensive drug and use[d] predominately by wealthier persons.’

**Table 18: Summary of current cocaine market and 2018 predictions**

	Current market		2018 predictions		Change	
	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members
<b>Availability</b>	Hard	Hard	Hard	Hard	No change	No change
<b>Purity</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium/High	Medium	Slight increase	No change
<b>Price</b>	\$100 or more per line	\$30–39/ \$50–59 per line	\$100 or more per line	\$50–59 per line	No change	Increase

Note: availability was measured on a scale of impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Purity was measured on a scale of low (<29%), medium (30–69%) and high (70–100%). Price was measured as cost per line

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

Cocaine was predicted to increase in price and to slightly increase in purity by the start of 2018 (see Table 18). The increase in price was predicted to be driven by ‘...depressed markets, poor production conditions or [law enforcement] engagement’. One VicPol member said, ‘Based on increased border seizures, it could be a bit more expensive as suppliers and dealers would like to keep the profit margin high.’ Four VicPol members reasoned that Victorian cocaine market conditions were completely determined by importation: ‘Australia is not seen as a very lucrative cocaine market by production countries in South America...It is due to its distance, affordability of the drug and dominance of more popular drugs like ice.’ Another VicPol member stated, ‘Cocaine has to be imported [from] offshore. It’s all dependent on law enforcement’s focus and whether there is more resources deployed to detect importations.’

### Predicted market influences

VicPol members predicted it was ‘likely’ that organised crime groups would increase their involvement in the cocaine market by the start of 2018 and this would have a ‘medium’ impact on the market (see Table 19). One VicPol member stated, ‘The diversification of illicit drug business by organised crime groups are likely. Supply of cocaine along with ice and heroin is possible considering demand for cocaine in this country.’ A similar comment was made by another VicPol member: ‘Will increase criminal networks’ profits and allow diversification into other crimes. Will allow criminal networks to legitimise their profits into property, business etc.’

VicPol members predicted it was ‘as likely as not’ that the availability and popularity of cocaine would increase by the start of 2018 (see Tables 20 and 21). As one VicPol member stated, ‘Cocaine popularity will increase but this does not mean it is more or less available. It is considered to be the Dom Perignon in the drug trade. Everyone wants it—not everyone can afford it.’

**Table 19: Police officers' prediction: Organised crime groups will increase their involvement with the Australian cocaine market by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	5	10
As likely as not	15	30
Likely	21	42
Almost certain	3	6
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	9	18
Medium	22	44
High	9	18
Don't know/Not answered	10	20
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 20: Police officers' prediction: The availability of cocaine will increase by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	2	4
Unlikely	9	18
As likely as not	20	40
Likely	12	24
Almost certain	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	21	42
High	6	12
Don't know/Not answered	11	22
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 21: Police officers' prediction: The popularity of cocaine will rise by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	1	2
Unlikely	8	16
As likely as not	18	36
Likely	14	28
Almost certain	3	6
Don't know/Not answered	6	12
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	20	40
High	7	14
Don't know/Not answered	11	22
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Cannabis

VicPol members and detainees ranked cannabis as the lowest priority illicit drug for the Victorian Government at the start of 2018. Sixteen VicPol members reasoned that cannabis is not associated with the same level of harm as other illicit drugs: ‘Although it still causes long term problems in users, I don’t see it posing the greatest risk.’ However, VicPol members noted that despite this perception cannabis use is associated with mental illness (n=8) and is a gateway drug (n=8). One VicPol member stated, ‘Readily accessible by the community, greatest acceptance by the broader community; however, long term mental health implications.’ Only four VicPol members used legalisation in their ranking rationale.

Thirteen detainees stated cannabis would be a low priority because it would likely be legalised by 2018: ‘May be legalised by then and being used for good medicinal purposes.’ Alternatively, four detainees reasoned the main harms of cannabis come from it being a gateway drug: ‘I started on this, then ecstasy, then onto methamphetamine. It’s a starter drug.’

The cannabis market was predicted to experience a decrease in price, a potential increase in availability and a slight increase in purity (see Table 22).

	Current market		2018 predictions		Change	
	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members	Detainees	VicPol members
<b>Availability</b>	Easy	Very easy	Very easy	Very easy	Increase	No change
<b>Purity</b>	Medium/High	High	High	High	Slight increase	No change
<b>Price</b>	\$20–29 per stick	\$20–29 per stick	\$11–19 per stick	\$11–19/ \$20–29 per stick	Decrease	Slight decrease

Note: availability was measured on a scale of impossible to obtain to very easy to obtain. Purity was measured on a scale of low (<29%), medium (30–69%) and high (70–100%). Price was measured as cost per stick

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

### Predicted market influences

VicPol members predicted it was ‘likely’ that there would be increased crop cultivation in Victoria by the start of 2018 (see Table 23). One VicPol member described the current situation by saying, ‘For every crop house found another starts up.’ VicPol members predicted it was ‘likely’ or ‘almost certain’ that organised crime groups (OCG) would play an active role in the cultivation of cannabis by the start of 2018: ‘OCG generally appear to have involvement in not only cannabis but other drugs (see Table 24). This is always an issue.’ Both predictions were expected to have a ‘medium’ impact on the market.

VicPol members predicted it was ‘unlikely’ that synthetic cannabinoids would drive down the price and demand for cannabis (see Table 25). VicPol members stated this was due to cannabis being readily available (n=3), a user preference for cannabis (n=5) and the harms associated with synthetic cannabinoid use (n=7).



VicPol members' opinions were divided as to whether cannabis would be legalised by the start of 2018; 23 VicPol members predicted it was 'unlikely' and 17 predicted that it was 'likely' (see Table 26). The predicted impact of legalisation on the cannabis market was 'low'. One VicPol member stated, 'It is likely that the legalisation of cannabis will have some impact on supply reduction action due to diversion of the drug from legitimate market. It would be similar to diversion of prescription drugs into the black market.'

VicPol members predicted it was unlikely that cannabis supply would decrease due to a shift to methamphetamine production (see Table 27). It was also predicted to be unlikely that demand for cannabis would decrease due to users switching to harder drugs (see Table 28): 'Cannabis is usually an added gateway drug. If more people are using meth for example that would lead to an increase in cannabis use also as they would use side by side,' and, 'Although there may be an increased demand on harder drugs there will always be a use for cannabis by lower level users and the up-coming users.'

**Table 23: Police officers' prediction: Crop cultivation in Victoria will increase by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	6	12
As likely as not	11	22
Likely	23	46
Almost certain	10	20
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	12	24
Medium	26	52
High	10	20
Don't know/Not answered	2	4
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 24: Police officers' prediction: Organised crime groups will play an active role in the cultivation of cannabis at the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	3	6
As likely as not	5	10
Likely	23	46
Almost certain	19	38
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	6	12
Medium	30	60
High	12	24
Don't know/Not answered	2	4
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 25: Police officers' prediction: Synthetic cannabis will reduce demand for and street price of 'natural' forms of cannabis by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	0	0
Unlikely	33	66
As likely as not	9	18
Likely	8	16
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	27	54
Medium	16	32
High	3	6
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 26: Police officers' prediction: Cannabis will be legalised or be in the process of being legalised by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	1	2
Unlikely	23	46
As likely as not	8	16
Likely	17	34
Almost certain	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	25	50
Medium	16	32
High	6	12
Don't know/Not answered	3	6
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 27: Police officers' prediction: There will be a decreased supply of cannabis due to a shift to methamphetamine production by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	2	4
Unlikely	41	82
As likely as not	4	8
Likely	3	6
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	33	66
Medium	12	24
High	1	2
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

**Table 28: Police officers' prediction: There will be decreased demand for cannabis as users switch to harder drugs by the start of 2018**

	Number	%
<b>Likelihood</b>		
Almost impossible	2	4
Unlikely	37	74
As likely as not	8	16
Likely	3	6
Almost certain	0	0
Don't know/Not answered	0	0
<b>Impact</b>		
Low	32	64
Medium	11	22
High	3	6
Don't know/Not answered	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Victorian illicit drug market 2016 [Computer File]

## Conclusions

Methamphetamine is predicted to be the highest priority drug for government in 2018. It is also predicted to be popular and to cause the most harm to users. This is likely due to current market conditions, which are for the most part predicted to remain unchanged. VicPol members predicted a slight decrease in availability and a slight increase in the price of methamphetamine by the start of 2018. These changes, if they occur, may indicate that the methamphetamine market has reached its peak and may be in decline by the start of 2018. This predicted decline may also be the anticipated consequence of the predicted increase in government and law enforcement focus on this market, and the education of users.

VicPol members predicted an increase in the involvement of organised crime in the methamphetamine market. They also predicted an increase in the number of clandestine laboratories and the number of young people involved in the supply of methamphetamine.

The heroin market is predicted to be stable between 2016 and 2018. No changes are predicted in availability, purity or price. However, some VicPol members reported recent market instability.

The ecstasy market was predicted to grow by the start of 2018. Detainees predicted ecstasy availability would decrease. However, only two detainees provided predictions about the ecstasy market; this must be considered when examining the predictions. VicPol members predicted a slight increase in the purity of ecstasy by the start of 2018, primarily driven by manufacturing processes and increased importation.

Cocaine was predicted to increase in price by the start of 2018 and to slightly increase in purity. The price rise was predicted to be due to increased border seizures and law enforcement efforts. However, VicPol members did not predict a decrease in availability which would logically be an anticipated consequence of increased seizures. This may be due to the prediction that organised crime groups would have increased involvement in the cocaine market by the start of 2018. Taken together, these findings suggest that price may rise due to the increased risk of importation seizure, but overall availability will not be impacted as there will be a proportionate rise in the number of importations attempted.

The price of cannabis was predicted by VicPol members and detainees to decrease at the start of 2018. Detainees also predicted that cannabis availability would increase and that there would be a slight increase in purity (potency) by the start of 2018. A potential increase in crop cultivation and involvement of organised crime groups in the market, as predicted by VicPol members, would be expected to create competition in the market which would ultimately drive down the price.

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