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Perth police seize \$18m drugs and a Ferrari

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Western Australia Police have seized nearly \$18 million worth of illicit drugs, firearms, cash, and even a luxury Ferrari in a sweeping crackdown on organised crime across Perth. The operation, carried out during June and July, led to nine arrests and the removal of almost 40 kilograms of methamphetamine from circulation.

The haul included \$800,000 in cash, three firearms, and a Ferrari, which police say will be sold, with its estimated \$500,000 value returned to the community. Investigators said the seizures represented hundreds of thousands of potential drug hits taken off WA streets at a time when methamphetamine use in the state has reached its highest levels in almost a decade.

Methamphetamine remains the most widely abused drug in Western Australia, with use rising sharply since the state's borders reopened following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's principal drug specialist, Shane Neilsen, said demand for stimulants had grown significantly and appeared resistant to traditional forms of treatment.

“That’s the thing we constantly advocate for treatment and also education to stop people taking the drug in the first place, around the dangers that it poses,” Mr Nielsen explained. He said meth use in Perth and regional WA had surged back to pre-pandemic levels, describing the shift as a “market correction” after COVID-related disruptions.

Nielsen also noted the global drug trade’s influence on Australia, pointing to South American and Mexican cartels flooding international markets with cocaine. “The world is just awash with cocaine at the moment. Australia is no different,” he said.

WA Police Commissioner Col Blanch said the state’s organised crime laws made it harder for criminals to operate on the west coast. He emphasised that drug syndicates often attempted to flaunt their profits but were quickly detected.

“As soon as they buy that Ferrari, as soon as they buy that house, as soon as they start flashing the cash, we’re onto them,” Commissioner Blanch said. He explained that most higher-level organised crime figures were not based in WA but operated from interstate or overseas.

Blanch also linked the issue to broader national concerns, citing two fatal shootings in Sydney suspected to be gang-related. “We can see some of the origins of this serious crime are coming from the east coast of Australia, and our job is to prevent it from coming to the community of WA,” he said.

According to the Commissioner, police are seizing more drugs nationally than users are consuming, highlighting both the scale of supply and the determination of law enforcement agencies. He said meth remained the preferred drug for West Australians but stressed cocaine and heroin continued to circulate widely across the country.

Authorities argue that enforcement alone is not enough to curb the problem. Commissioner Blanch called for a multi-agency response to reduce demand and provide support for users trying to break free from addiction. “Anyone using drugs in WA, particularly methamphetamine, we should help them get off the drugs so that demand decreases,” he said.

Nielsen echoed those concerns, saying that education campaigns alongside treatment options were crucial to tackling the state’s reliance on methamphetamine. Without reducing

demand, he warned, the lucrative trade would continue to attract organised crime groups from Australia and abroad.

Despite high-profile arrests and seizures, experts acknowledge WA's drug market remains difficult to dismantle. Methamphetamine is cheaper and more available than ever, driving addiction rates higher in both Perth and regional towns. Police say they remain committed to striking at the supply chain while also working with health and education agencies to curb demand.

The Ferrari and cash seized during the operation are expected to be auctioned in the coming months, with proceeds directed back into the WA community under the proceeds of crime legislation.

For now, authorities are framing the operation as a major win, removing tens of millions of dollars in drugs from circulation. But with meth use at its highest in a decade, the challenge of keeping WA communities safe from organized crime remains ongoing.