

# 30pc addicts abstain while on methadone

By BARRY GRINDROD

THIRTY per cent of drug addicts using the Government's methadone programme abstain from heroin during treatment, while the rest reduce their intake sharply.

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Mr David Weeks revealed the figures to the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna.

Mr Weeks, who has just returned from Europe where he also attended the latest meeting of the Financial Action Task Force in Paris, said the obvious side effect of this was less needle use and a reduction in the risk of AIDS.

Between 8,000 and 10,000 addicts in Hongkong are on the daily methadone programme.

Of the 200 cases of AIDS and HIV infection encountered in Hongkong up to the end of March, he said, only five related to drug abusers.

Mr Weeks told the meeting that for 20 years the emphasis of reducing the demand through education, information and treatment and rehabilitation, had been the same as attempts to reduce the supply.

"We have a firm commitment to encouraging ev-



David Weeks

ery treatment modality that may be helpful to particular people and in this connection we are also committed to making treatment available at all times and at a price everyone can afford — free if necessary — to anyone who seeks help," Mr Weeks said.

Mr Weeks said yesterday the international drug trafficking and the laundering of drug money in the territory was of great concern.

Hongkong could not afford to spend as much as the US, France and Germany in tackling the problem but it was every bit as serious, he said.

However, the territory proportionally was probably doing more to cut the international trafficking than anyone else.