



*the leading voice in Indigenous drug and alcohol policy advice*

**National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee**

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## MARCH MEETING COMMUNIQUE 2011

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**As part of its commitment to provide high level advice to government, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), with the support of the Australian Government, established the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) to provide advice to government on ways to address problematic alcohol and other drug use among Indigenous Australians.**

**NIDAC comprises members from non-government and government organisations with specialist expertise and knowledge from around Australia.**

**NIDAC Meeting:**

Committee meetings are held in a different State or Territory every four months.

At its March 2011 meeting in Adelaide, South Australia, NIDAC members discussed the following:

### **Alice Springs**

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NIDAC member, Ms Donna Ah Chee provided a verbal report on the situation in Alice Springs.

Key points from Ms Ah Chee's report include the following:

- 18 percent reduction in the population consumption of pure alcohol in Alice Springs since the alcohol restrictions began in late 2006 until 2009. Since then consumption has again increased by about 6% almost entirely due to the increase sale of cheap wine.
- The largest social impacts are the result of readily-accessible cheap wine: "cleanskins" and casks in 2 litre quantities.
- The majority of takeaway retailers have expressed their support for a voluntary accord to achieve an alcohol floor price based on the price of beer. The NT Liquor Licensing Commission needs to progress this as a matter of urgency.
- There has been a serious spike in property crime and anti social behaviour in the latter part of 2010 and over the Christmas New year period. There has not been a corresponding spike in interpersonal violence although this has gradually worsened as consumption has increased. This is due to multiple factors and involves town and bush people. Any relationship with the NTER is unproven and needs to be further explored. This spike in property crime has been brought under control by additional police leaving the underlying long term issues still to be addressed.
- Alice Springs has a large number of liquor outlets for the size of its population. This includes 3 anomalous takeaway licences of a type that probably doesn't exist anywhere

else in the country. One is a petrol station and the other two are corner stores or 'milk bars'. Last year the NT Government advised there would be liquor license buy-back of these three takeaway licences leaving only nine other takeaway outlets all attached to supermarkets or pubs. The buyback is essential to achieving the voluntary accord on the floor price as well as removing the link between takeaway alcohol and petrol, bread and milk.

- The NT Governments' Enough is Enough campaign - highlighting and explaining the new alcohol reforms, including the new NT Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal and new legislation which is to commence on 1 July 2011. The new Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal will be involved in referring people for support and quarantining individual's payments if they are not taking responsibility of their children and family as a result of problematic alcohol use.
- The NT Government has provided funding of: \$1.35m which will go towards funding of a local youth centre, and additional \$340 000 for permanent public safety lightning to replace temporary lighting; \$1.28m has also been allocated for housing support; and \$1.2m is to go towards creating one-hundred new CDEP places.
- It is also important to invest in primary health care including alcohol and other drug treatment in remote communities, and supporting early childhood development to promote resilience to alcohol and other drugs amongst young people.

Recommendations on how governments could respond to a number of areas of concern in Alice Springs has been provided to Minister Macklin from NIDAC.

## Data

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The ongoing issue around the paucity of alcohol and other drug use prevalence data was discussed at the meeting. The lack of this data makes it difficult to determine the actual use of alcohol and other drugs by Indigenous Australians and thus target the type and level of intervention and service provision.

In the discussion around the Prime Minister's report on Closing the Gap on 9 May, the need to have hard data to measure firstly the level of Indigenous disadvantage and then the impact that any interventions may have on improving the level of disadvantage, was noted.

## NIDAC Conference

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The NIDAC Conference Committee met in Adelaide on 16 March to commence planning the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference which is being held in Fremantle on 6 – 8 June 2012. Information regarding the Conference, including a call for abstracts and registration will be provided in the coming months.

## National Drug Strategy 2010 -2015

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NIDAC discussed the recently released National Drug Strategy 2010 – 2015 and welcomed the commitment by the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD) to develop a specific National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Drug Strategy, as one of the IGCD's three immediate priority areas.

NIDAC has written to the IGCD offering advice and assistance in the development of the new strategy.

## NIDAC's 1<sup>st</sup> On line Consultation Survey

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NIDAC discussed the 1<sup>st</sup> NIDAC on line consultation that was to be sent out to the sector before the end of March. This consultation seeks the views of workers on potential interventions to reduce the harms of alcohol in Indigenous communities as well as knowledge about any resources that can assist workers with Indigenous clients experiencing problems from their alcohol use.

The use of on line consultations has been developed as a means of expanding and complimenting the current consultation process which is via face to face forums and is in the form of short online surveys. These online surveys are targeted towards persons working to address problematic alcohol and other drug use among Indigenous Australians.

For further information about the survey and to take part, please visit: [NIDAC Online Consultation 1: Alcohol](#).

**Closing date for the survey is Friday 29 April and participation is confidential.**

## Close the Gap Meeting with the Prime Minister

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NIDAC's chair, Assoc Professor Ted Wilkes, together with members of Close the Gap (CTG) leadership group met with the Prime Minister on 9 February. This was the first meeting between an Australian Prime Minister and a collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders for some time. Ministers Roxon, Snowdon and Macklin were also present.

The Prime Minister accepted a gift of a mounted and framed stethoscope dot painted in the colours of the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag. A plaque attached stated 'Hearing us, and working with us, to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality' with the names of the organisations present being listed underneath.



L - R: Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, Minister of FAHCSIA Jenny Macklin, Pat Anderson - Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute Board, Associate Professor Ted Wilkes - Chairperson of NIDAC.



L - R: Dr. Tom Calma - National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking in Australia, Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Pat Anderson - Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute Board, Associate Professor Peter O'Mara - President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association.

## Implementation Plan

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NIDAC discussed and agreed to the placement of a document, *the NIDAC Implementation Plan 2011* onto the NIDAC website, thus making this document available to the sector.

The Plan had been developed by NIDAC to provide government with implementation strategies for acting upon the key issues and recommendations from the NIDAC commissioned report, *Indigenous specific alcohol and other drug interventions: continuities, changes and areas of greatest need*. Resolutions developed by delegates attending the inaugural National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference held in June 2010, have been utilised as grounding principles.

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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NIDAC discussed the draft version of its position paper on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). It is anticipated that this paper will be completed towards the second half of 2011.

## Injecting Drug Use and Associated Harms Among Aboriginal Australians

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The release of the next Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) report on, *Injecting Drug Use and Associated Harms Among Aboriginal Australians*, was discussed at the meeting.

This report was developed by ANEX and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and examines the available data on prevalence, as well as the dimensions and characteristics of, injecting drug use and its associated harms among Aboriginal Australians.

Copies of this report will be available from the NIDAC Secretariat and from the NIDAC website from the 19 April.

## Next Meeting

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To be announced.



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