



The leading voice in Indigenous drug and alcohol policy advice

National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee

MARCH MEETING COMMUNIQUÉ 2012

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).

NIDAC comprises members from non-government and government organisations with specialist expertise and knowledge from around Australia to provide advice to government on ways to address harmful drug and alcohol (AOD) use amongst Indigenous Australians.

Committee meetings and consultations with people working with Indigenous drug and alcohol issues are held in a different State or Territory every four months. Through these meetings and consultation forums, NIDAC is able to ensure that the views of the sector are considered as part of its advice.

In March 2012, NIDAC:

- Conducted a community consultation forum in Brisbane, Queensland, with people that work to address harmful Indigenous drug and alcohol use, which included presentations from Mr Dallas Leon and Mr Eddie Fewings representing The Queensland Indigenous Substance Misuse Council (QISMC), and Dr Bill Kingswell (Queensland Health). An *Acknowledgement of Country* was delivered by Ms Val Coolwell, in recognition of the Jagera and Turrbal peoples – traditional custodians of the Brisbane region.
- Conducted its regular Executive and Members meeting.

NIDAC Consultation Forum

The first forum for 2012 was attended by around 30 people, with a number of issues being raised for discussion and debate.

Key issues raised included:

- ❖ The need for a uniform approach to alcohol and other drug (AOD) care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland;
- ❖ The uncertainty over current Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs) created by statements in the recent election campaign. Concerns were also expressed over current AMPs in Northern Queensland where there has been a lack of consultation with communities and an absence of investment in local culturally appropriate AOD programs, rehabilitation services and education campaigns. This has resulted in harmful consequences including the use of home brew which is negatively impacting on individuals and communities;
- ❖ Concern over the increase in the levels of substance use among females in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in recent years;
- ❖ The increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being fined related to AOD matters and also ending up in prison for not being able to pay the fines;
- ❖ Consideration being given for funding received from any AOD related fines to be redirected into AOD treatment;

- ❖ The importance of diversion programs being able to cater to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- ❖ Concern over the paucity of AOD aftercare services;
- ❖ The potential impact of decisions from the flexible funding grants from the Department of Health and Ageing;
- ❖ The need for data on prevalence, as well as recognized diagnostic tools for assessing FASD;
- ❖ The need for AOD services to be culturally sensitive and the need to overcome the cultural barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing pharmacotherapies.

NIDAC Meeting

NIDAC discussed and debated a number of issues at its meeting which included the following:

- ❖ The finalization of the NIDAC Strategic Plan for 2012 -14 ready for release in mid April;
- ❖ The commissioning of a new project by NIDAC on economic modelling on the costs and benefits of addressing problematic Indigenous substance use with treatment as compared to prison;
- ❖ The launch of NIDAC's position paper on FASD at the NIDAC Conference in Fremantle in June;
- ❖ The launch of the updated NIDAC position paper *Bridges and Barriers – Indigenous Incarceration and Health* in mid June;
- ❖ An update on the project currently being undertaken by NIDAC on behalf of FaHCSIA which looks at the development of a toolkit and training package to assist in the introduction of alcohol and other substance use management plans in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities;
- ❖ The need for a professional body that provides full membership for Indigenous drug and alcohol workers and the inclusion of a workshop at the 2012 NIDAC Conference to explore interest in developing such a body;
- ❖ The launch of the NSW Campaign for Justice Reinvestment for Young Aboriginal People at Government House in Sydney on 2nd May 2012;
- ❖ The need for clarification on the process for Indigenous AOD services under the new flexible funding grants arrangements, including recognition on some of the difficulties for these organisations face in competing with major mainstream NGOs in the development of submissions;
- ❖ Progress on the 2nd National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference which is being held in Fremantle, WA, from 6th – 8th June, 2012, including discussion on the inaugural NIDAC Conference Awards and the release of the full conference program;

Next Meeting – Darwin 8th - 9th August, 2012

For information on Indigenous specific alcohol and other drug issues, NIDAC priorities and activities – visit www.nidac.org.au

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