

Communique—June 2006

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is the principal advisory body to the Government on drug policy and plays a critical role in ensuring the voice of the community is heard in relation to drug related policies and strategies. A particular priority of the ANCD is to support initiatives that continue to build capacity within the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector to facilitate best practice. 

The ANCD consists of representatives from the government and non government drug and alcohol sector from around Australia. Council meetings and consultations with people working with drug and alcohol issues (treatment, research, policing, education etc) are held in a different State and Territory every three months. Through these meetings and consultation forums, the ANCD is able to ensure that the views of the sector, in particular non-government, community-based organisations are considered as part of drug policy advice.

At its June 2006 meeting in Perth the ANCD discussed the following issues:

NGO Treatment Grants Program (NGOTGP) Funding Update

The Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) recently announced the extension to the end of June 2008 of the Non Government Organisations Treatment Grants Program under the National Illicit Drug Strategy. This funding has been continued at the same level as 2005-06 funding.

The ANCD is currently exploring options with government for additional funding to be allocated to cover increases in costs such as CPI for the services being funded under this initiative. Ensuring this program is consolidated and expanded by governments in the future will also be a priority for the ANCD.

Outcome: The ANCD is negotiating with the Department of Health and Ageing and the Australian Government to ensure adequate current and future funding for the NGOTGP.

Cannabis Booklet Launch

The ANCD launched its latest publication “Cannabis answers to your questions” in early May. This booklet is designed to address the most commonly asked questions about cannabis and is written to suit an audience that includes the media, key decision makers and their advisors, the alcohol and other drug sector and interested members of the community. The literature review on which the booklet is based together with the booklet is available from the ANCD website.

Outcome: A new booklet titled Cannabis – answers to your questions has been published by the ANCD and can be accessed from the ANCD website.

2006 Federal Budget

The ANCD will be working closely with government to ensure that the recent Federal Budget allocation of approximately \$250 million to address drug and alcohol issues will achieve the best outcomes for the Australian community.

Outcome: The ANCD is working with the Australian Government and its Departments to ensure the best use of the funding announced in the 2006 Federal Budget.

Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative

The continuation of funding for the COAG Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative (IDDI) is to be considered by the Australian Government in the near future and the ANCD will be providing a high level of input into this decision making process.

Outcome: The ANCD will be providing a report to the Prime Minister and the Australian Government on the principles that should underpin any future phases of the IDDI.

Community Partnerships Initiative (CPI)

At a recent CPI meeting, chaired by the ANCD, the Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) announced a fifth round of funding under this initiative. The Department is seeking Expressions of Interest from incorporated community groups or organisations who can demonstrate the ability to develop a prevention or early intervention project with the support of other groups in the community.

Interested groups are encouraged to obtain and submit the application and documentation online at the Department of Health and Ageing website at www.health.gov.au/ Applications closed on 13 August 2006.

Outcome: The ANCD will be chairing the Department of Health and Ageing Committee responsible for the development, assessment and implementation of this Fifth Round of the Community Partnership Initiative.

Rural and Regional Study Grants

In recognition of the limited budget for staff training and development in agencies that deal with AOD issues, in particular, the costs borne by rural and regional based agencies the ANCD has recently announced its Rural and Regional Study Grants for 2006. These grants are open to rural and regional based workers who deal with AOD issues. It provides financial assistance to allow individuals to work for a short period of time in another AOD agency(s) and/or attend a conference(s) within Australia.

Through this initiative, the ANCD endeavours to facilitate networking within the AOD and related sectors, as well as provide professional development opportunities for rural and regional based workers. The ANCD is also committed to the concepts of co-operation and partnership within the sector and this initiative represents one strategy towards achieving that aim.

Application closed on Friday 14 July, grants will be announced in September 2006.

Outcome: The ANCD Rural and Regional Study Grants for 2006 were recently announced. Refer to the ANCD website for more details.

Reference Groups and Committee Reports

The following reference groups and committee updates were reported on throughout the meeting:

- **National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee (NIDAC)** — continues to meet quarterly around Australia. NIDAC last met in Brisbane in April, next meets in Perth in August. Public Forums are held at each meeting, where attendees have the opportunities to provide feedback to NIDAC members on issues relevant to the Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Sector.
- **Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative** — an Evaluation Steering Committee has been assembled of IGCD, ANCD and Department of Health & Ageing representatives to manage the process of evaluating the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative.
- **School Drug Education Strategy** — will be discussed in greater depth with the Federal Education Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop in the coming months.
- **Strengthening Families Initiatives** — the ANCD continues to work closely with the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) on relevant projects. A range of projects are run under this initiative, focussing on youth, families and support in relation to drugs and alcohol
- **Needle and Syringe Programs** — the ANCD continues to provide advice for this vital initiative.
- **Supply Reduction Measures** — the ANCD will continue to receive briefings on national supply reduction issues, but will supplement this information with relevant state & territory information where available.
- **Asia Pacific Drug Issues** — the ANCD commissioned Asia-Pacific Situational Analysis publication will be launched in September 2006. The ANCD will also be having meetings with AusAID to discuss the recent Federal Budget announcement.
- **Co-morbidity Initiatives** — the ANCD has recently developed a position paper on the COAG Mental Health Initiative. The paper will be the basis of some discussions in upcoming meetings with the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers.
- **Rural & Regional Initiative** — this initiative has been set up to improve access to drug treatment in rural and regional areas. The ANCD will request further information from the Department of Health & Ageing on the development and implementation of this initiative.
- **National Campaigns** — the ANCD will again have a pivotal role in advising the Australian Government on the content of proposed campaigns announced in the Federal Budget.

'Of Substance' Update

'Of Substance' is an Australian National Council on Drugs initiative and is produced with funding from the Department of Health and Ageing. 'Of Substance' is a free, quarterly magazine.

Outcome: There are currently over 9,000 copies of the magazine in circulation.

Next Meeting

Members were informed that the next meeting will be in Adelaide from 13–15 September 2006. An agency consultation forum is held before the meeting which is attended by people involved in the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and related sectors. The intention of this forum is to keep these sectors informed on national developments, but more importantly to provide an opportunity for these sectors to raise issues of concern and note directly with the ANCD.

Conclusion

More information on the Australian National Council on Drugs is available by accessing the ANCD website: www.ancd.org.au or by contacting the ANCD Secretariat: PO Box 1552 Canberra ACT 2601 P 02 62791650 or F 02 62791610.

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The ANCD is the principal advisory body to Government on drug and alcohol issues.

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