

## Communique - June 2013

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is the principal advisory body to the Prime Minister and Federal Government on drug and alcohol policy and plays a critical role in ensuring the views of the many sectors involved in addressing drug and alcohol problems, as well as the community, are heard. 

The ANCD membership for the 2011-2014 term was announced in 2011 by the Prime Minister and includes people from both the non government and government drug, alcohol and related sectors including treatment, medicine, research, law enforcement, Indigenous health, local government, education, mental health, consumers, and the magistracy from around Australia. The full membership can be found at: [ANCD Members](#)

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### ANCD Consultation Forum

The ANCD met in Sydney in June 2013. This meeting was preceded by a consultation forum with people who work to address drug and alcohol issues. The forum was attended by over 60 people and included presentations from Mr Sione Crawford (A/CEO, NSW Users & AIDS Association - NUAA), Mr Larry Pierce (CEO, NSW Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies - NADA), and Mr David McGrath (Director, Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Office, NSW Department of Health).

Matters discussed during the forum included:

- The proposed changes to NSW Health's funding model for NGOs, and its effects on the sector and services. Issues noted with this proposed funding round and previous Commonwealth funding rounds were: problems associated with competitive funding (including its effects on smaller, specialised, and Indigenous services); length of funding terms; the need for preferred service provider status; the dehumanising nature of some approaches which focus on outputs only; and the need for much greater consultation with NGOs and consumers in making decisions about planning and funding. There was also concern expressed that the process at times rewarded a capacity to write a professional submission, not necessarily the history, quality or nature of the service provided. The process was also viewed as sometimes operating against the interests of collaborative service models and quality, seamless care.
- The need for a greater range of services focussed on the changing needs and patterns of consumption amongst women.
- The consequences of no longer having the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, and the subsequent weakening of national drug strategy governance arrangements as a result, particularly the partnership between health and law enforcement.
- Concern about the growing pressures for compulsory treatment, including the recent NSW Inquiry into Drug and Alcohol Treatment, and its potential detrimental effects on the sector given the lack of evidence supporting such treatment models. While there was an understanding of the limited need for short term

care for those at risk to themselves or others, the concerns included displacing voluntary clients engaged in evidence based approaches, with compulsory clients engaged in an approach unsupported by evidence.

- The need for far greater access to treatment and harm reduction services in NSW prisons.
- Concern over recent trends surrounding harm reduction more generally. These include the reduction of spending on harm reduction reported recently in Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP) research; reports of needle and syringe (NSP) services having been defunded; continuing issues of poor access to NSP services; continuing restrictions on the equipment available at NSPs in NSW; and lack of attention to some injecting health harms such as endocarditis.
- Continuing issues of lack of access to drug and alcohol treatment services for many people in the community. The problems with accessing opiate pharmacotherapy services in particular were raised.
- The need to understand the challenges posed by an ageing population of drug users, including developing, and increasing access to, appropriate services for this group.
- The need for clarity on determining effective drug treatment service models and the role of accreditation in ensuring the use of evidence-based interventions and good outcomes for clients.
- The need to acknowledge the important progress of many NGOs in gaining accreditation as well as providing them with the necessary support to implement continuous improvement systems and access to a nationally consistent streamlined system.
- The need to collect more information from frontline workers on synthetic drugs (new psychoactive drugs - NPS) on the problems they are causing and assess the anecdotal evidence of the higher harms associated with synthetic cannabinoids than with cannabis. The importance of developing a broad range of responses to NPS, based on supply, demand and harm reduction was also raised, particularly given the number of young people beginning to appear in the treatment system with NPS use problems.
- Concern was expressed over recent increases in levels of overdoses, and the need for expanded responses, including both intervention and prevention. There was discussion of recent development surrounding expanding naloxone availability in NSW, and the need for more action in this area; inclusion of an overdose response in the national resuscitation guidelines; upcoming changes in the formulation of *Oxycontin* and its potential to increase use of other opioids; and apparent increases in the use of fentanyl.
- The ongoing barriers to consumer participation and representation in drug policy and program development, including low levels of funding for representative groups.

## ANCD Meeting

The ANCD discussed and determined a course of action on a number of matters at its meeting. These included:

- The upcoming event on August 1 at Parliament House on Employment Participation issues for people experiencing AOD problems, mental health issues, homelessness, and/or social exclusion. This is being organised by the ANCD in conjunction with the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness, the National Mental Health Commission, and the Social Inclusion Board. Members also discussed the following

reports and position papers, which will be released at this event:

- *A Joint Statement*
  - *Working Together for Greater Social Inclusion: ANCD Employment Services Roundtable Report*
  - *ANCD Employment Participation Survey: Full Report*
  - *ANCD Position Paper: Pre-employment Criminal Record Checks*
  - *ANCD Position paper: Drug Testing*
- Members considered and discussed recent legislative developments surrounding NPS recent trends and research, the recent report on NPS by the Legal Affairs Committee of the Legislative Assembly of NSW, and approaches taken overseas. It was agreed to liaise closely with government officials on the development of an effective, appropriate and balanced response to NPS.
  - Members resolved to provide a greater level of advice and assistance to schools on alcohol and drug issues as part of the process in releasing the ANCD's *Secondary Schools Principals Survey Report* in coming months. Members also resolved to write to all Education Ministers with a view to gaining a greater focus on these issues within all jurisdictions.
  - Members discussed the recent NSW Legislative Council's report on the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes, and agreed to develop a position paper for wider dissemination on the issue.
  - Members received a presentation from Ms Suzie Matthews of the City of Sydney Council on their recent research on the Night Time Economy (NTE). The presentation provided an overview of this research, which includes data on a number of Local Government Areas in Australia, and the role of local governments in responding to alcohol use, including the innovative approach and measures taken by the City of Sydney. The members particularly noted that the role and value of alcohol in the NTE was far less than expected, with food proving to be a much greater component. The value in further invigorating the NTE with improved safety and options was also noted. The report can be viewed at - [NTE Report](#).
  - Members received an update on the work of its National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC). Recent work undertaken by NIDAC includes community consultations to inform the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Drug Strategy; continuing work surrounding a professional body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander AOD workers; and meetings with Closing the Gap workers and bodies. Information on planning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Conference in Melbourne in 2014 was also provided.
  - Members received an update on the work of its Asia-Pacific Drug Issues Committee. Recent work includes work with a range of international partners to develop an international conference on regional issues; planning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> roundtable on compulsory centres for drug users with UN agencies; and work surrounding the upcoming mid-term review of the International Global Plan on Drugs 2009-2019.
  - Members received an update on 'Of Substance' magazine. Recent developments include the work towards developing a search facility for the magazine's articles, and the plan for all subscribers to Of Substance to re-subscribe towards the end of this year, to ensure the integrity of its subscriber database.
  - Members held ANCD's Annual Projects workshop, and discussed a number of potential projects which the ANCD will pursue during 2013-14. Projects decided upon were:
    - Ageing and drug use: a research project on key issues to address in relation to ageing populations who are using drugs, such as pain management, other health issues, and appropriate service design and delivery.
    - Online modelling tool for justice reinvestment investments and outcomes in local areas. The tool will be developed as a NSW-based pilot with the NSW Justice Reinvestment Committee.

- Opioid dependence treatment options paper. The project will provide a literature review of the full range of pharmacological treatment options for opioid dependency, and will be written for a general and policy audience.
- Several smaller projects are to be pursued in-house, on the importance and need for expansion of harm reduction measures; and drug use among CALD migrant populations.
- In addition, the ANCD resolved to develop a cannabis offences and diversions project. The project will seek to provide data on the impacts of cannabis offences and diversions to treatment on people who use cannabis, impacts of current charging and diversion arrangements on the justice system, and reasons that some may not take up interventions. As this may be a large project the ANCD is to seek additional funding from an appropriate body.
- In recognition of the concerns expressed at this Consultation Forum and previous forums around the country, as well as the high level of communication received by the ANCD on the issue of funding models, the ANCD will also develop a Statement of Principles for Funding AOD Services to support the AOD sector and to provide timely advice for governments and other funding bodies currently reviewing this issue.

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As previously agreed with the Prime Minister, the ANCD will provide a report on the outcomes and discussions of each ANCD meeting. The next meeting of the ANCD, which will include a consultation forum, will take place in October 2013 in Hobart.

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Further information on the ANCD's work and activities can be found on the ANCD websites:

[Australian National Council on Drugs](#)

[National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee](#)

[Of Substance & Jobs of Substance](#)

[Asia Pacific Drug Issues Committee](#)

[Positive Stories](#)

***For any further details on this communiqué please contact the ANCD Secretariat on [ancd@ancd.org.au](mailto:ancd@ancd.org.au) or (02) 6166 9600***