


Communique - September 2008

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. 

The ANCD consists of representatives from the non government and government drug and alcohol and related sectors (treatment, research, law enforcement, education etc) from around Australia.

Council meetings and consultations with people working with drug and alcohol issues are held in a different State or 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.

In September 2008 in Adelaide the ANCD:

- received informative presentations from Mr Keith Evans (SA Health Department) and from Mr Andris Banders (SANDAS the SA peak AOD NGO body)
- held a consultation forum with agencies working with drug and alcohol related matters; and
- conducted its regular quarterly meeting with presentations from:
 - Ms Robyn Vial — Drug and Alcohol Services SA (DASSA);
 - Ms Carol Holly — SA Voice in IV Education (SAVIVE);
 - Dr Mark Doverty — Department of Health and Ageing;
 - Mr Mark Cooper-Stanbury — Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; and
 - Dr Jan Patterson — SA Social Inclusion Board.

AOD Consultation Forum:

The forum was attended by over 80 people with a number of issues being raised for discussion and debate. Specifically these issues included:

- The need for a greater level of continuity between alcohol and drugs services and mental health services within South Australia;
- The development of a National Child Protection Framework;
- The lack of after care services available, particularly outside metropolitan areas;
- The current lack of certainty surrounding Federal Government NGO funding and the dramatic impact this is having on service delivery, as well as staff recruitment and retention within the NGO sector;
- The need for increased State Government investment in NGO drug and alcohol services;
- The need for a greater emphasis on prevention, particularly in young women regarding alcohol and tobacco use;
- The need for greater treatment availability particularly pharmacotherapy options.

ANCD Meeting:

International Federation of Non-Government Organisations (IFNGO)

After many years of working with the IFNGO the ANCD welcomed and accepted the invitation to become a full member of IFNGO. The IFNGO comprises Non-Government Organizations from all over the world, but primarily within the Asian Region, engaged in drug and alcohol prevention and treatment activities.

ANCD 2008–09 Federal Budget Submission

As has occurred annually since its inception in 1998 the ANCD will be preparing a Federal Budget submission for the consideration of the Prime Minister and his Ministers. As has also occurred in the past the submission will focus on initiatives to meet the needs of the broader community and all sectors involved in addressing drug and alcohol issues. The widespread expertise of the ANCD members, including those on its committees will be utilised to develop the submission.

Macau Delegation

It was noted in the meeting that the ANCD is hosting the members of the Macau AIDS Commission which consists of people from the Social Welfare Bureau, the Health Bureau, the Judiciary, Police, other government departments and non-government organisations from Macau. The delegation will be in Australia for one week and within that time will visit education programs, consumer advocacy organisations, therapeutic communities, law enforcement officers, pharmacotherapy facilities and also have meetings with officers from a range of Federal Government Departments.

Presentation by Social Inclusion Board

In this presentation, the Board and Monsignor Cappelletti's concerns about drug and alcohol misuse were raised. They also welcomed the opportunity for dialogue with the ANCD on these matters. The discussion centred on the need for social inclusion to provide a greater focus on the broader health, social and welfare issues that affect people's use and misuse of substances. However, the importance of doing this to achieve real outcomes for communities rather than simply creating another layer of bureaucracy, complexity or a realignment of funding was also discussed.

Importance of Maintaining Data

The presentation given by Mr Mark Cooper-Stanbury from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on the 2007 National Household Survey results was welcomed by ANCD members and clearly highlighted the importance of maintaining access to data — particularly within the area of short and long term risk of alcohol, tobacco and other substances — to ensure quality research continues in the sector.

The issue of the short term substitution of spirits for RTDs since the introduction of Alcopops tax was also raised as an issue needing monitoring.

'Of Substance' Update

'Of Substance' is an ANCD initiative and is produced with funding from the Department of Health and Ageing. 'Of Substance' is a free, quarterly magazine. An update was provided by Dr Young and Professor Makkai. The October edition is currently at the printers. The next publication which is due in October focuses on

homelessness. The distribution of the magazine continues to grow substantially with a readership of over 30,000 people in health, education, law enforcement and policy areas. The receipt of the magazine by nearly every parliamentarian in Australia was also noted by the ANCD members.

Recent Activity and Reports

ANCD members approved and finalised the following initiatives:

- Global NGO Review Beyond 2008: Australian Report
- 16th October — MPs Breakfast, Mural Hall Parliament House
- 31st October — Launch of the Homeless website, Mathew Talbot Centre Sydney
- New project on Injecting Drug Use and Related Harm Amongst Indigenous Australians
- New project on Situational Analysis of Drug and Alcohol Issues and Responses in the Pacific Region (Asia Pacific Drug Issues Committee)

Next Meeting

Members were informed that the next meeting will be in Melbourne from the 27th – 28th of November where a consultation forum will also be held with agencies on the Thursday the 27th of November (9:00am – 11:00am).

Conclusion

More information on the Australian National Council on Drugs is available by accessing the ANCD website: www.ancd.org.au or by contacting Mr Gino Vumbaca, Executive Director of the ANCD on 02 6166 9600 or 0408 244 552