


Communique - September 2009

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 many sectors involved, as well as 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 2009 in Darwin the ANCD:

- Visited the Darwin prison
- Conducted an agency and community consultation forum at the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Services (CAAPS) premises as part of their annual Open Day
- Conducted its regular quarterly meeting with presentations from:
 - Commander Jeanette Kerr, Katherine Police Station & Mr John Lee, Substance Abuse Operations Section, FaHCSIA regarding the work of the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk Taskforce;
 - A/Prof Robert Ali on the Royal Australasian College of Physicians paper regarding the issues surrounding the misuse of prescription drugs;
 - Prof Margaret Hamilton regarding the work and outcomes of the Victorian Multiple and Complex Needs Panel and its implications for the AOD sector.

Joint ANCD – NIDAC AOD Consultation Forum

The joint forum with the National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) was attended by over 80 people with a number of issues being raised for discussion and debate. Specifically these issues included:

- The need for the Northern Territory government to complete its election commitment regarding the review of the Northern Territory Liquor Act.
- The negative impact of the Northern Territory anti-social legislation on Indigenous communities and its failure to address the anti-social behaviour by non-Indigenous people;
- The need for a detailed review of the pressure being felt by 'dry' Indigenous communities to accept canteens (where alcohol would be available);
- The importance of ongoing and confirmed funding to allow organisations to plan and grow their services and meet the changing needs of the community;
- The difficulty faced by services in attracting and maintaining a workforce with funding agreements that are based on low salary scales;
- The high level of anxiety regarding the funding arrangements to be put in place for NGOs within the new Health Care Agreements;
- The lack of diversion services available in many parts of the Northern Territory;
- The need to address and gain a better understanding on the level and impact of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD);

- The need for a greater level of flexibility in the provision of pharmacotherapy services, particularly its availability;
- The unacceptable level of Indigenous incarceration;
- The need for a specific youth services in the Northern Territory;
- The increasing use and impact of cannabis in many Northern Territory communities;
- The need to clarify and address issues surrounding the availability and use of kava in Indigenous communities;

ANCD Meeting

The ANCD discussed and debated a number of issues at its meeting which included agreements that:

- The importance and value available from significant investment in residential services such as the Indigenous controlled CAAPS in preventing and treating drug and alcohol related crime as an alternative to prison;
- The need to ensure that prisons are reserved as a 'last resort' option by adequately funding drug and alcohol diversion programs;
- Assisting FaHCSIA in its research based evaluation on the outcomes for communities from the SAID Taskforce initiative;
- The need to develop a broadly based and systematic approach to the growing misuse of prescription drugs that encompasses expansion of pharmacotherapy programs as well as minimising any unintended consequences, particularly for those people with legitimate pain management needs;
- Via the current Social Compact development process being implemented by the Australian Government, promoting the simplification of access to appropriate and accredited service delivery systems for individuals with multiple and complex needs;
- Preparing a combined response to the Australian Government on the release of the National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission, National Preventative Health Taskforce and Primary Health Care reports;
- Providing a copy to each state/territory based NGO peak body of the recent correspondence from the ANCD to every State/Territory Premier/Chief Minister regarding funding for the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative under the new Australian Health Care Agreements;
- To continue to assist the Department of Health & Ageing and the IGCD/MCDS in the development and implementation of the new National Drug Strategy consultation process;
- To continue to engage in the development of the National Compact process being undertaken by the Australian Government;
- To continue to engage with the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmitted Infections on the development of national blood borne virus related strategies;
- To widely promote the new 'Jobs Of Substance' website for AOD and related sectors;
- To underwrite and widely promote the inaugural National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Conference in Adelaide in June 2010;
- To support the ANCD Asia-Pacific Drug Issues Committee to assist the AusAID funded HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Program (HAARP).

Report Launches

On the 17th of August 2009, the ANCD released two reports, *Polygon the many sides to the Australian opioid pharmacotherapy maintenance system* and *Modelling pharmacotherapy maintenance in Australia exploring affordability, availability, accessibility and quality using system dynamics*, it commissioned from the Drug Policy & Modelling program (DPMP) as part of a half-day seminar on pharmacotherapy issues –

both reports are available at www.ancd.org.au

Next Meeting

The next ANCD meeting will be in Hobart on the 26th & 27th of November 2009 where a consultation forum will also be held with agencies on the 26th of November (9:00am – 11:00am).