

Council calls for more co-operation and money to tackle Indigenous issues

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In releasing the second phase of the Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Projects — “Elements of Best Practice” — in Alice Springs today, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has signalled that it will shortly be meeting with Federal, State and Territory Ministers to request a significant improvement in the levels of co-operation and funding needed to tackle drug and alcohol issues in Indigenous communities.

The Chairman of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, said “The Council is well aware of the good job being done by Indigenous organisations around Australia and feels that it is important that we identify the specific aspects of these projects that make them so effective. In profiling the five organisations, the ANCD is basically trying to identify the elements of best practice that these organisations demonstrate to be successful. It is our hope that these elements will then be considered by other Indigenous agencies as they work to deal with drug and alcohol issues.”

The five organisations which were profiled in the report are:

- Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc. – Adelaide
- Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services Inc. – Darwin
- Milliya Rumurra Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Centre – Broome
- Tangentyere Council Night Patrol – Alice Springs
- WuChopperen Health Service Ltd: Drugs, Alcohol and Other Substances program – Cairns

Scott Wilson (an Executive member of the ANCD) added “each Indigenous community has its own unique history and set of circumstances and this means that any intervention project must be delivered in consultation and in a manner that is consistent with the community’s needs and culture.”

Associate Professor Dennis Gray, Deputy Director of the National Drug Research Institute, which conducted the study said “As previous research conducted on behalf of the ANCD demonstrates, most substance misuse intervention projects for Indigenous Australians are conducted by Indigenous people themselves. This study is important because it highlights the positive things people in these five community-controlled organisations are doing and provides a guide for people in other communities who are conducting, or who are planning to conduct similar projects.”

The report identified a number of elements of best practice which include:

- Indigenous community control;
- clearly defined management structures and procedures;
- trained staff and effective staff development programs;
- multi-strategy and collaborative approaches;
- adequate funding;

- clearly defined realistic objectives aimed at the provision of appropriate services that address community needs.

A/Prof Ted Wilkes (an ANCD Member) added “as Chair of the National Reference Group that developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Complementary Action Plan 2003-2006 it is evident that this report confirms the goal of the complementary action plan to implement culturally appropriate and flexible programs. But of course this cannot be done without a significant rethink on the financial commitment of all governments.”

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

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