

Drug Council endorses plan of action to address substance abuse

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) meeting in Canberra yesterday endorsed a number of actions, which will significantly enhance the national effort to address substance abuse.

The ANCD, the peak non-government advisory council to governments on drug policy and service delivery, agreed to make the diversion of drug offenders a priority issue for the Council. To this end, the Council agreed to a number of significant actions:

- The establishment of an ANCD Standing Committee on Diversion;
- The participation of the ANCD in key aspects of the implementation of the Council of Australian Governments agreement on diversion, including National Expert Working Groups on Treatment, Police and Courts, Education and Training and Data and Evaluation; and
- The convening of a National Forum on Diversion in November 1999.

The ANCD also expects to be represented at a senior level by its Chairman, Major Brian Watters, in the implementation of the COAG agreement.

The Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, addressed the Australian National Council on Drugs meeting, and reiterated his strong support for the work of the Council. He called on the Council to play a major role in the implementation of the Council of Australian Governments agreement. He also called on the Council to play a major role in facilitating public debate on drug issues.

The ANCD also agreed to a number of other key initiatives, including:

- A review of indigenous youth substance abuse programs and strategies;
- A review of best practice, innovative and state of the art practices in treatment;
- A mapping of the number and nature of treatment places in Australia;
- An examination of indicators of unmet need for treatment, including waiting lists;
- The employment of a project officer to progress the training of frontline professionals; and
- The commissioning of a paper on drug policy and practices in Australia over the last 25 years.

The ANCD also called on the Prime Minister to expedite the implementation of the National School Drug Education Strategy.

These actions emphasise the central role which the ANCD currently plays, and will continue to play, in the development of national drug policies in Australia.

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