

Illicit Drug Report - 11 June 2009

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has welcomed today's release of the Australian Crime Commission's 2007/08 Illicit Drug Data Report. 

Dr John Herron, Chairman of the ANCD and AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty (ANCD Deputy Chair) jointly stated: "This data plays a very important part in helping us understand what is happening with illicit drug use in Australia and globally. The report also demonstrates the high level of co-operation between law enforcement services in this country which is vital if we are to continue to reduce the availability of illicit drugs."

The report highlights a number of changes in the supply and availability of illicit drugs, such as:

- Global opium production has reached record levels, however the heroin market in Australia remains relatively stable though it appears that an increasing amount of the heroin seized is now being sourced from South West Asia (Afghanistan);
- Opium cultivation in South East Asia has increased by 22% after years of decline - most of this was due to a 29% increase within Myanmar (Burma) to 27,700 hectares;
- A 71% increase in the number of cocaine detections at the border, though the overall weight of cocaine border seizures remained largely consistent with the higher levels experienced in 2006/07;
- Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) continue to be a major area of concern with a high level of domestic production and increased detections at the border;
- Cannabis remains the most widely used and detected illicit drug in Australia.

Dr Herron and Commissioner Keelty added: "As arrests for cannabis use reach over 44,000 and as ATS arrest rates reach their highest level on record with over 11,000 users being arrested, the report serves as a timely reminder on the importance of increasing our investments in treatment and harm reduction services. If we want to build on these efforts to reduce the availability of illicit drugs by reducing the levels of drug use and the harm it causes individuals and communities, then these efforts in law enforcement have to be matched by similar efforts to undermine the demand for illicit drugs with effective treatment, prevention and harm reduction programs. The co-operation between our health and law enforcement officials and the balanced and innovative partnerships we already see between these groups are based on a common desire by all involved to achieve a public good – an approach for which they deserve our thanks."

Gino Vumbaca, Executive Director of the ANCD concluded: "As the report demonstrates, illicit drug use continues to be a global issue and the efforts in Australia are assisted and complemented by co-operation with other countries and organisations such as the United Nations. Given the often immense problems being faced in our region from illicit drug use, there is clearly an obligation on Australia to assist and aid our neighbours as much as possible on this issue – and when we look at the success here across law enforcement, treatment and harm reduction, particularly in keeping HIV rates so low, it is clear that Australia has a lot to offer and of course can always continue to learn"

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The ANCD is the principal advisory body to Government on drug and alcohol issues and includes a diverse range of experts from health, law enforcement, treatment, education, research and non-

government sectors.

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The full report is available at: <http://www.crimecommission.gov.au/index.htm>