

National Council commends Victorian workforce

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) recently convened in Melbourne for its first meeting of 2005. As part of the meeting the ANCD conducted an open forum with Victorian based drug and alcohol frontline staff to discuss issues affecting the sector, clients and families of drug users.

Commenting on the forum, the Chairman of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, stated "The level of expertise and understanding of issues amongst Victorian drug and alcohol workers was most impressive. They gave myself and my colleagues on the ANCD a lot to think about such as further acknowledging the important role families play in drug use prevention; the increasing level of mental health problems being dealt with by drug and alcohol agencies; and the importance of finding out more on the things we need to do to help people enjoy a sustained recovery from drug use."

The ANCD noted that on Saturday, 2 April 2005, it has been 20 years since Australia first adopted a national drug strategy based upon the principles of simultaneously reducing the supply, demand and harm caused by drugs. This balanced approach has provided Australia with a partnership focussed strategy that has gained wide support across the country and internationally.

The ANCD welcomed its newest member, Ms Kim Gates, from the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services Inc. (CAAPS) in Darwin. Major Watters commented, "Ms Gates' experience in the provision of drug and alcohol services in the Northern Territory will be of great benefit to the ANCD and provides us with even stronger links to Indigenous communities and the problems they face."

Members of the ANCD congratulated Associate Professor Ted Wilkes on his election as Chair of the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) which recently held its inaugural meeting to establish its priorities and plans for the future. Whilst NIDAC is auspiced by the ANCD it will operate as an independent group that will work closely with governments and NGOs to advise on responses to reduce the uptake, use and harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs on Indigenous communities. It will also provide regular reports to governments and the National Indigenous Council.

Congratulations were also extended to Professor Margaret Hamilton and Mr Garth Pople on their appointment as Co-Deputy Chairs of the ANCD by the Prime Minister. Professor Hamilton and Mr Pople will assist current Deputy Chair Commissioner Mick Keelty.

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

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