

## National Council targets federal election, alcohol advertising, Indigenous issues and tobacco warnings

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In an effort to promote a wide consensus on drug and alcohol issues during the lead up to the Federal election the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has announced its intention to hold discussions with all political parties.

The Chairman of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, stated “It is imperative that all parties work together to prevent the uptake and use of drugs and to reduce the pain, suffering and harm caused by drug use. The Council will be raising key national areas for parties to focus on such as further increasing drug treatment availability, increasing support for the non-government sector, addressing alcohol related problems, supporting Indigenous communities, addressing the level and transmission of hepatitis C and tackling drug use and treatment opportunities in our prisons.”

The Council also received a briefing on the revised self-regulation protocols on alcohol advertising and has undertaken to closely monitor the level, tone and type of alcohol advertising in Australia.

Major Watters added “the Council as far back as mid 2000 has repeatedly been asking for the alcohol industry to face up to its responsibilities and contribute financially to programs addressing the problems caused by alcohol. We also expect that given alcohol kills more than 3,200 people and is responsible for over 43,000 hospital admissions each year the industry must be extremely careful in how it markets and promotes its products, especially in relation to the impact some of their practices may have on young people.”

The Council also received further briefings on the issues affecting Indigenous communities from the Office of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health and reiterated its earlier pledge to focus on addressing Indigenous issues with innovative and practical strategies and programs; an issue it will raise directly with all political parties.

Executive Officer of the ANCD, Mr Gino Vumbaca commented “The impact of drug and alcohol misuse on Indigenous communities is often heartbreaking and at a recent Health and Police Ministerial meeting, the ANCD raised this matter as one requiring urgent attention and commitment. The Council is now working with a range of Indigenous and health organisations to develop clear advice for all governments on the way forward.

The Council also expressed its dismay at the belatedly cynical attempt by tobacco companies to delay and reduce the introduction of graphic warning labels on cigarette packets. Quite simply the ANCD unanimously believes that any product that kills more than 19,000 people and is responsible for over 142,000 hospital admissions each year should be regularly subjected to the introduction of extremely strong and prominently displayed warnings on its use.

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

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