

National Drug Council re-affirms support for National Strategy

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) acknowledges the release of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs report — ‘Road to Recovery’ — an Inquiry into Substance Abuse in Australian Communities.

The ‘Road to Recovery’ is a comprehensive report covering a broad range of drugs including alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, heroin and psychostimulants. It also addresses many complex issues including alcohol taxation, occupational health & safety, road trauma, family functioning, the role of schools, health services and law enforcement.

The 128 recommendations in the Report are very broad and far reaching, and whilst the ANCD endorses many of the findings, it also has very serious concerns about others.

Over the coming months, the ANCD looks forward to consulting further with the government about its response to the Report.

It is expected that where specific recommendations are being seriously considered, the ANCD will be given the opportunity to provide advice to the government on whether, and how, such strategies can be translated into effective practice.

It is also important to note that the ANCD supports the Australian National Drug Strategy continuing to be built upon the pillars of supply, demand and harm reduction. These pillars include prevention of the uptake of drug use, providing a wide range of treatments for those using drugs, and reducing the levels of harm for drug users and the broader community.

Whilst noting the recent and somewhat unhelpful semantic debate about national drug policy, the ANCD has re-affirmed its support for a national drug strategy that is committed to preventing and minimising the harm caused by drugs to individuals, families and the wider community.

The ANCD’s position is based on the following accepted description of harm minimisation as agreed by the Australian, State and Territory governments, NGOs and other key bodies in 1998 as part of the National Drug Strategic Framework for Australia.

“Harm minimisation refers to policies and programs aimed at reducing drug related harm. It aims to improve health, social and economic outcomes for both the community and the individual and encompasses a wide range of approaches including abstinence orientated strategies. Both licit and illicit drugs are the focus of Australia’s harm minimisation strategy. Harm minimisation includes preventing anticipated harm and reducing actual harm. Harm minimisation is consistent with a comprehensive approach to drug related harm, involving a balance between demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction”.

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

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