

Queensland diversion announcement has National Drugs Council support

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), the peak advisory body to Government on drug policy established by the Prime Minister in 1998, has expressed its strong support for the recently announced bi-lateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, to divert illicit drug users from the criminal justice system to education and treatment.

Major Brian Watters, Chair of the ANCD stated - "The Prime Minister and Queensland Premier are to be congratulated for their mutual commitment to this humane and positive response to illicit drug use. In addition to the \$19.5 million of Commonwealth Government funds, the Queensland Government is also making contributions of resources to this program. This initiative will mean minor drug offenders will be diverted to skilled professionals in the government and non-government education and treatment services, to address the source of the problem."

"The Council is also pleased to see that the Queensland Diversion Agreement acknowledges the particular issues associated with both indigenous offenders and young offenders".

Major Watters concluded – "The Council has been involved in and supportive of the Diversion Initiative since the very beginning. We have been working with every State and Territory to ensure the community and non-government sector is involved in this \$110 million national initiative. The Council would like to particularly acknowledge the work of Mr Dennis Young, who represented the ANCD on the Queensland Reference Group and who has contributed to the development of this Agreement."

Mr Dennis Young, Executive Director of Drug-Arm and ANCD member on the Reference Group responsible for the development of the Queensland Diversion Agreement confirmed the Council's support for the initiative. "More and more, people are beginning to appreciate that it is better to divert a first time, minor offender away from the criminal justice system and utilise the education and treatment services that exist in the alcohol and other drugs sector. It is also important that Queensland Police Officers will be able to act confidently due to the range of amendments being made to the Act governing their responsibilities and powers. Police need clear instructions to guide their actions, and this consideration is indicative of the thorough planning that has gone into Queensland's Diversion Agreement."

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