

## Strong National Council support for Federal Government Diversion Initiative

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), established in 1998 as the peak advisory body on drug policy and services, has given a strong endorsement of the Diversion Initiative announcement by the Federal Government.

Major Brian Watters, Chairman of the Council stated "The Council welcomed the opportunity to represent the non-government sector in the development of this Diversion Initiative. However, the Federal Government, and in particular the Prime Minister, deserve a great deal of praise for taking the lead on this matter and for their substantial financial commitment to ensure its success"

Major Watters added " For some time now the Council has been advising all governments on the importance of introducing systems that divert drug users from the criminal justice system to drug and alcohol treatment. Diversion to treatment is especially important for first time offenders if we are to try and stop their progression into a cycle of crime and drug use. Many parents and families will be relieved to know that if their children or other family members are using illicit drugs, that there will be an opportunity for them to receive help and treatment rather than end up in jail"

The National Council has also welcomed the initiative for effectively establishing a collaborative approach to drug use by the law enforcement and health systems of Australia.

"The bringing together of law enforcement and drug treatment staff to deal with drug use and its impact on the community represents a significant step forward in Australian drug policy and debate. There is little doubt that the community as a whole will benefit from this approach." Major Watters added.

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