

Communique - February 2012

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is the principal advisory body to the Prime Minister and Federal Government on drug and alcohol policy and plays a critical role in ensuring the views of the community and the many professional sectors involved in addressing drug and alcohol problems are heard. 

The ANCD membership is appointed by the Prime Minister and includes people from both the non government and government drug, alcohol and related sectors including treatment, medicine, research, law enforcement, Indigenous health, local government, education, mental health, consumers, and the magistracy from around Australia

The full ANCD membership for the 2011-2014 term can be found at: [ANCD Members](#)

Prior to its regular meeting in February 2012 the ANCD conducted a consultation forum in Melbourne with people that work to address drug and alcohol issues which included presentations from Mr Pier De Carlo (Victorian Department of Health), Mr Sam Biondo (Victorian Drug and Alcohol Association, VAADA) and Mr David Templeman (Alcohol and Drug Council of Australia, ADCA) .

ANCD Consultation Forum

The meeting was attended by over 60 people with a number of matters raised for discussion. These included:

- Concern that the historically significant Australian partnership approach between law enforcement and health to address alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues was beginning to falter and adversely affect the health and community sectors ability to engage, assist and treat people experiencing harms from drug use;
- There was a lack of consultation with the AOD sector in the development of the Victoria Family Action Plan Framework which subsequently failed to adequately recognise the interface between family violence issues and AOD issues;
- There is a need to place a far greater emphasis within the employment services network to assist those completing treatment into gainful work;
- The low number of general practitioners able to prescribe opiate based pharmacotherapy in Victoria, and nationally, is in part attributable to regulations requiring pharmacotherapy prescribing to be an 'opt in' service which differs to the access general practitioners and patients have for many other medical services;
- The impact of pharmacotherapy dispensing costs were also seen to be responsible for creating a barrier for many people requiring access to this service and again was viewed as treating people with drug dependence issues differently from others;
- The need to understand the potential effects and unintended consequences of increased drug testing in the workplace; and the importance of these programs being focussed on critical occupations;
- The exponential and continuing increase in the requirement for prospective employees to provide police clearances to employers and the costs and barriers to employment this is creating;
- The increasing difficulty of the current approach to addressing synthetic cannabis, as well as other synthetic drug products, and the need to explore potentially more effective responses;
- The need for 'Proceeds of Crime Act' funds to be equally shared by law enforcement and health, social

and harm reduction NGO services;

- The recent approval of a peer based naloxone program as part of a comprehensive overdose prevention and management program in the ACT and the need for the current scheduling and legislative barriers of this life saving drug to be reviewed across Australia;
- The importance of the current discussions of 'Recovery' for people with drug and alcohol problems to also recognise that as a relapsing condition the role and access to harm reduction services remains critical in any comprehensive strategy.

ANCD meeting

During the meeting, ANCD Members were pleased to meet with the Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Social Inclusion; Minister for Mental Health and Ageing; Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform, to discuss a number of policy and program areas. In addition, the ANCD discussed and determined action on a number of issues at its meeting which included:

- Establishing a collaborative approach with key stakeholders in the AOD sector to appropriately define and describe the place of 'Recovery' within the Australian framework of supply, demand and harm reduction given that this is Australia's strategic response to drug and alcohol problems;
- Exploring the ongoing lack of quality information on overdoses, fatal and non-fatal, with a view to significantly increasing the availability and access to this important data;
- The need for far greater funding to increase AOD treatment availability and access given the expected high levels of unmet demand after the current Department of Health and Ageing treatment funding processes are completed;
- The need to re-establish greater levels of communication between the health and law enforcement sectors in addressing drug and alcohol issues at every level;
- The need to clarify the funding impact of the recent Fair Work Australia decision on wage increases in the community sector given the anxiety within the sector's management to make responsible budgeting decisions;
- The finalisation of the ANCD position paper on Naltrexone Sustained Release Preparations (Injectable and Implants)
- The need for accurate and timely data on the number of people being arrested, charged and diverted for cannabis-related offences;
- The current health reform processes and its impact on the AOD sector, including the appropriate location of AOD services in both the hospital and community sectors;
- The upcoming release of key ANCD commissioned reports and the status of a number of ANCD policy position papers currently in development.

As previously agreed with the Prime Minister, the ANCD will be providing a report on the outcomes and discussions of each ANCD meeting.

The next meeting of the ANCD, including a consultation forum is scheduled for the 25th – 27th of June 2012 in Adelaide.

Further information can on the work and activities can be located at the ANCD websites:

[Australian National Council on Drugs](http://www.ancd.org.au)

National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee

Of Substance

Asia Pacific Drug Issues Committee

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Positive Stories

For any further details on this communiqué please contact the ANCD Secretariat on ancd@ancd.org.au or (02) 6166 9600