

Communique - June 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 many sectors involved in addressing drug and alcohol problems, as well as the community, is heard. 

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

Prior to its regular meeting in June 2012 the ANCD conducted a consultation forum in Adelaide with people that work to address drug and alcohol issues which included presentations from Ms Marina Bowshall (Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia), Mr Andris Banders (South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services), and Mr Mark Tiller (South Australian Voice for I.V. Education).

ANCD Consultation Forum

The forum was attended by over 70 people with a number of matters raised for discussion. These included:

- The Flexible Funds tendering process for NGO funding was the subject of much discussion with many expressing a need for more sector and consumer consultations, mapping service needs, and strengthening accreditation or quality assurance for organisations. Issues with the current funding processes were raised, including lack of transparency, its tendency to fragment service provision, linkages with State and Territory funding bodies and the effects on staff morale and staff turnover.
- The critical importance of funding and delivering a diverse range of services in the AOD sector (such as methadone programs, in- and out-patient services, harm reduction programs) in metropolitan and rural locations to meet the needs of clients, families and communities.
- The lack of appropriate data on treatment service provision and on treatment need was identified as a barrier to progress to achieving better service provision.
- The lack of available places in residential services and waiting lists for some pharmacotherapy programs were raised as issues of concern, as well as the barriers to treatment-seeking from costs (pharmacotherapy) and stigma.
- The need to describe and promote effective service models for the sector.
- A number of issues surrounding communication between different parts and levels of government, between governments and NGOs, and between different NGOs. The need for an increasing level coordination of efforts in order to provide individuals with a continuum of linked care was expressed. The importance of better information dissemination to overcome the lack of connection and integration between different services was also highlighted.
- A number of interrelated issues related to children and the family were raised, including a common need for the family to be included in treatment, and supported and acknowledged, when appropriate. Work on child and family sensitive, and child and family inclusive, practices in development was discussed. This issue in particular revealed the need for integration of different services and for frameworks at different

levels to work together, including child protection services.

- Some expressed the view that there is a loss of momentum to harm reduction measures such as needle and syringe programs and education for drug users in South Australia, and nationally, despite the strong and clear evidence of its positive impacts.
- The need for increased community debate about illicit drug policy and examination of policy by government bodies was expressed.
- The need to address issues of transition from prison back to the community was discussed, as well as homelessness, marginalisation, unemployment and barriers to employment arising from the exponential increase in the use of police checks by employers – enhancing access to employment can be a critical part of improving quality of life and reducing the risk of relapse.

ANCD Meeting

The ANCD discussed and determined action on a number of matters at its meeting, these included:

- The development of a number of papers related to addressing employment barriers:
 - a position paper on current and potential employment services in Australia for clients of AOD treatment services or other people with substance use issues, including a survey of AOD treatment services seeking their input on such employment services;
 - a briefing paper on the increasing use of police checks to vet potential employees, particularly its effects on people with alcohol or drug-related offences; and
 - a briefing paper on drug testing in the workplace.
- The development of advice on NGO treatment service grants, with reference to the recent Flexible Funds announcements - the ANCD recognises the critical importance of consultation with the sector (government and NGO) and consumers in relation to service planning and funding, and is committed to engaging with the Minister and the Department in improving future funding processes.
- The release of the ANCD's updated position paper on the use of naloxone, 'Expanding Naloxone Availability'.
- The ANCD convening a roundtable discussion on pharmacotherapies in August with participants from medicine, consumer groups, pharmacy, government, and peak bodies, as well as expert advisors.
- The critical importance for continued partnerships and dialogue between health and law enforcement sectors and the difficulties that exist with the demise of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in effectively maintaining this successful approach.
- Discussion on the Australia21 report *The Prohibition of Illicit Drugs is Killing and Criminalising our Children and We are Letting it Happen* - the ANCD recognises that all public policy should be open to review and scrutiny as part of promoting informed debate in the community on such issues.
- Presentations were received by members on several current issues, including:
 - Professor Steve Allsop presented on emerging synthetic drugs, which are often designed to circumvent legislation. The need for better understanding of the use of such drugs, their medical status and risks, and of how to best respond to changes in drug supply and distribution networks was discussed. Prof Allsop also spoke about community actions to address alcohol-related harms in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia by restricting the availability of alcohol, and the impressive effects of these interventions.
 - Professor Dorothy Scott presented on child and family issues and ways in which they are interrelated with harmful substance use issues as both causes and effects. Information on how services can be made more child and family sensitive, or child and family inclusive, and ongoing research in the area was given.

- Mr Nick Heath presented on the role of local government in addressing alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms, providing information on the extent of local government resources directed towards reducing these harms; with particular emphasis on the cost and harms associated with alcohol consumption. Mr Heath also spoke of the importance of the night-time economy to cities and the efforts to support and sustain this while reducing the focus on alcohol consumption.
- Ms Wilma Gallet presented on issues impacting on people with substance use issues, in respect to employment assistance, with a focus on the current employment services system in place under Job Services Australia and the need to explore options that will ensure the effective engagement and service delivery to people in and exiting treatment services.
- Ms Colleen Krestensen (Department of Health & Ageing) on the Flexible Fund and other funding processes.
- Members also viewed a short film developed by the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL), Afternoons with Max Marshall. The film is part of AIVL's anti-discrimination campaign, and is available online at <http://maxmarshallmovie.com>.

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 30th-31st of October 2012 in Fremantle.

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

[Australian National Council on Drugs](#)

[National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee](#)

[Of Substance & Jobs of Substance](#)

[Asia Pacific Drug Issues Committee](#)

[Positive Stories](#)

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