

Communique - May 2009

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is the principal advisory body to the Government on drug policy and plays a critical role in ensuring the voice of the many sectors involved, as well as the community, is heard in relation to drug related policies and strategies.



The ANCD consists of representatives from the non government and government drug and alcohol and related sectors (treatment, research, law enforcement, education etc) from around Australia.

Council meetings and consultations with people working with drug and alcohol issues are held in a different State or Territory every three months. Through these meetings and consultation forums, the ANCD is able to ensure that the views of the sector, in particular non-government, community-based organisations are considered as part of drug policy advice.

In May 2009 in Brisbane the ANCD:

- launched the ANCD Monograph (No: 17) - 'Non-government organisations in the alcohol and other drugs sector: issues and options for sustainability' and the ANCD Survey – **'The Burden of Submission Writing and Reporting for Alcohol and Other Drug Non Government Organisations'**
- conducted its regular quarterly meeting with presentations from:
 - Prof Theo Vos, Director, Centre for Burden of Disease and Cost-Effectiveness School of Population Health University of Queensland
 - Maria Simonelli and Wayne Wescott (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives Oceania's Executive Manager) and Mark Boyd (Cities for Safe and Healthy Communities Director) representing Ms Jude Munro – Brisbane City Council CEO;

Joint ANCD – NIDAC AOD Consultation Forum:

The joint forum with the National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) was attended by over 100 people with a number of issues being raised for discussion and debate. Specifically these issues included:

- The importance of addressing foetal alcohol syndrome disorder (FASD) and cannabis issues early to enable greater employment prospects, as well creating a greater public awareness of the harms of drinking and the impact this has on children;
- The need for mandatory alcohol labelling to contain health related information and advice similar to which already occurs for some exported alcohol beverage products;
- The need for strong referral links and ongoing support systems to keep youth engaged in programs;
- The need for organisations to have the funding capacity to plan and grow their services over future years.
- The positive impact of employment for people either completing or undergoing treatment;
- The high level of anxiety on the funding arrangements to be put in place for NGOs within the new Health Care Agreements from 1 July 2009;
- The need for the NGO sector to strengthen its business case for government funding by providing greater levels of research and evidence on its effectiveness;
- The need for research on the impact of alcohol management plans, particularly dry communities and whether this had increased migration to, and homelessness within wet communities or other unintended consequences such as increased use of other substances;
- The recent report for QAIF & QISMC that highlighted the importance of building capacity of organisations

to deliver better services to, and within, Indigenous communities;

- The unacceptable increase in the levels of Indigenous incarceration; which could be reduced by improving the levels of numeracy and literacy and skills amongst offenders and treating people within prison;
- The need for a specific Indigenous women's treatment service in Brisbane;
- The importance of the AOD sector working more closely with the child protection system;
- Dealing more effectively with clients that are affected by co-morbidity and multiple needs;

ANCD Meeting:

The ANCD discussed and debated a number of issues at its meeting which included agreements that:

- There is a real need to better understand and address the place of both alcohol and drug education within the school environment;
- Australia maintain its prominence in international debates and forums on drug policy issues;
- Consideration be given to reviewing the actual advertising code on alcohol as a means of addressing some of the problems encountered by the current system ;
- Care be taken in addressing the complex and differentiated issues that surround the increasing levels of prescription drug misuse to ensure that no unintended adverse outcomes occur and that no unnecessary restrictions on the legitimate use of the pharmaceuticals are imposed;
- The ANCD commission 2 new projects to address current issues affecting the sectors involved in addressing substance misuse;
- The ANCD continue to discuss the impact of the new Health Care Agreements on the sectors involved in addressing substance misuse, particularly the NGO sector;
- The ANCD would strongly support the upcoming release of a NIDAC paper on reducing the level of Indigenous incarceration;
- Strong support is given to the 1st NIDAC National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference to be held in Adelaide in 2010.

Report Launches

- On the 25th of June 2009, the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) Position Paper on **reducing the incarceration of Indigenous people and improving health**;
- In the 3rd Quarter of 2009, the commissioned report on **opioid pharmacotherapy** in Australia.

Next Meeting

The next ANCD meeting will be in Darwin on the 3rd & 4th of September 2009 where a consultation forum will also be held with agencies on the 3rd of September (9:00am – 11:00am).

More information on the Australian National Council on Drugs is available by accessing the ANCD website: www.ancd.org.au or by contacting Mr Gino Vumbaca, Executive Director of the ANCD on

02 6166 9600 or 0408-244-552