

## Communique - September 2011

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 this 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](#)

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Prior to its regular meeting in September 2011 the ANCD conducted a consultation forum in Brisbane with people that work to address drug and alcohol issues,.

### ANCD Consultation Forum

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

Specifically these matters included:

- Non Government Organisations (NGO) services being under extreme financial pressure from increases in award wages and demands for service. A lack of growth funding and uncertainty in government funding arrangements was contributing to this situation;
- The possibility of some NGO services significantly reducing services or considering closure if unable to resolve the enduring demands upon their services without appropriate funding;
- The continuing need for better and regular data on Indigenous rates of drug use, especially related to cannabis, as well as injecting drug use;
- The continuing and alarming over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the justice system and the resultant loss of opportunities, especially for young Indigenous people;
- The possible over-representation of people with foetal alcohol syndrome disorder in the prison system and the need to develop better strategies to identify and address these problems within the community rather than within the prison system;
- The importance of investment in alcohol policies and programs that are based on evidence;
- The need for further discussion and information on the potential medicinal use of cannabis;
- The increase in young people coming into contact with the criminal justice system as a result of a focus on law enforcement to address drug and alcohol issues rather than the health system;
- The need for disaster contingency planning to also take into account people on pharmacotherapy and other treatment programs;

### ANCD Meeting

The ANCD discussed and determined action on a number of issues at its meeting which included:

- Welcoming the long overdue wage increases for staff in the drug and alcohol sector but also agreeing to highlight directly with Federal Government Ministers and senior departmental officials the funding

pressures that this created on the NGO sector;

- Promoting a sharper focus on increasing the employment participation for people in the treatment system;
- Developing a comprehensive and innovative package of prevention and treatment policy initiatives to substantially reduce illicit opiate (street heroin & misuse of pharmaceuticals) use and harms to individuals, families and the community;
- Promoting greater availability and timeliness of fatal and non-fatal overdose data, as well as data on police and paramedic responses to drug and alcohol related problems;
- Increasing the opportunities for people using drugs and those adversely affected by drug use to contribute to the development and implementation of effective policies and programs;
- Developing modern campaigns to assist young people in preventing and responding to exposure and use of drugs and alcohol;
- Working more closely with law enforcement authorities to reduce the impact of cannabis offences on young people, including a re-focus on the use of diversion programs;
- Releasing a short position statement on the use of naltrexone implants as a treatment for opiate dependence;
- Welcoming the high level of contributions from its National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee, National Magazine (Of Substance) and Asia-Pacific Drug Issues Committee (particularly the progress on the upcoming International Conference in Malaysia – [www.ifngoconference.org](http://www.ifngoconference.org) );
- Approving a number of projects that included:
  - Enhancing the level of information and effectiveness of responses to alcohol use and harms;
  - Addressing drug and alcohol issues within the school environment;
  - Promoting alternative funding opportunities and options for the NGO sector;
  - Examining the evidence of pharmacotherapy treatment for amphetamine type stimulant use;
  - Increasing thiamine intake to reduce the negative impact of alcohol use;
  - Increasing understanding of the financial pressures on NGOs in the drug and alcohol sector;
  - Examining the positive and negative impact of technology on drug and alcohol issues;
  - Instituting a comprehensive survey of youth views, responses and solutions to drug and alcohol issues affecting young people:
  - Reviewing current family and children related evidence to identify key areas of need in addressing drug and alcohol issues.

The ANCD also expressed its disappointment that reform of alcohol taxation in Australia was not given the attention it deserved given the profound impact and cost of alcohol on the health system and broader community and the strong and consistent evidence of the influence of price, and taxation, on consumption and harm.

As a result, the ANCD publicly called on all political parties to consider undertaking a process to develop a co-operative approach to establishing an effective and less harmful alcohol taxation regime than currently exists in Australia;

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 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2012 in Melbourne.

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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

Asia Pacific Drug Issues Committee

Jobs of Substance

Positive Stories

***For any further details on this communiqué please contact the ANCD Secretariat on [ancd@ancd.org.au](mailto:ancd@ancd.org.au)***