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Major Brian Watters, Chairman of the ANCD said “Drug use can, and does, cause deep divisions within families in Australia.”

At its recent meeting in Hobart, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) heard the disturbing situation facing many families who are trying to access information, services and assistance to cope with a drug using member of their family.

Continuing, Major Watters stated, “At the consultation forum in Hobart, I – and other members of the ANCD – were deeply touched by the commitment but also by the desperation of a number of grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. Whilst there is obviously strong agreement within the ANCD about the need for services and support for drug users, there are also others who are affected by drug use and who also need and deserve our help.”

Major Watters concluded, “The emotional trauma being experienced by these grandparents who are trying to cope with their children’s drug use is compounded by the responsibility of also caring for their grandchildren, often without appropriate financial – or indeed any other – assistance.”

At the Hobart meeting, the ANCD discussed priority areas for its new initiatives in the coming financial year. Given that families and family support have been consistently raised as major concerns in ANCD consultations, the Council has made a commitment to make a significant contribution to try to improve the situation experienced by affected families.

Professor Hamilton, Director of Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre & Executive ANCD member added - “It is understandable that families may wish to be fully informed and involved in the treatment process, however great care is required in equating the needs of the individual drug user and those of the family. Given the potential welfare, child protection and other implications, the drug and alcohol sector has the capacity to play an integral role in ensuring an appropriate balance is maintained.”

Other members of the ANCD, Ms Tonie Miller (Toughlove Tasmania) and Ms Julie Hanbury (Parent Drug Information Service, Western Australia) added, “The situation where a parent discovers their child’s drug use is frequently a crisis point. These parents often do not know where or to whom to turn, or how to access information and support. Very few treatment services cater for families and this is a critical issue for the drug and alcohol sector to address. Families are important in maintaining successful treatment outcomes for the drug using person; however they also need assistance in their own lives and require support to achieve stability.”

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*The ANCD is the principal advisory body to Government on drug and alcohol issues.*

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