

Keeping Indigenous youth out of custody

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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) today launched its sixth research report “Diversion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth from Juvenile Detention”.

The report provides a detailed picture of the number and rate of detention of young people and more specifically Indigenous youth, in Australia. The report also details some of the options available to divert young Indigenous people from the juvenile justice system.

Major Brian Watters, Chairman of the ANCD said “As many people would be aware, the ANCD is committed to assisting Indigenous communities in addressing drug and alcohol issues. We hope that this report will not only stimulate some debate on how best to deal with young Indigenous people who come to the attention of the justice system because of their drug and alcohol problems, but will also provide information on the range of options possible and available.”

Mr Scott Wilson, Director of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (ADAC) SA and an Executive Member of the ANCD stated, “This report provides positive examples of what we can do as a community to address the alarming over-representation of Indigenous people in prisons around this country. There is clear evidence that drug and alcohol misuse adds to this unacceptably high rate of Indigenous incarceration. We hope that this report will provide an opportunity for communities and governments to realise that we can break this sole destroying cycle of drug use, crime and prison amongst some of our young people.”

Major Watters concluded, “To date, the ANCD has been very pleased with the commitment of all governments, and in particular, the commitment of the Federal Government, in providing over \$300 million for the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative. The Council endorses the principle that it is more humane and effective to provide drug and alcohol treatment for those experiencing addiction problems, rather than imprisoning them.”

“ In keeping with this commitment, we recommend that all governments read and carefully consider the recommendations contained within this report” Major Watters said.

Copies of this report can be obtained via the [ANCD web site](#) or by contacting the ANCD Secretariat — 02 6279 1650.

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

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