

Mapping of Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Projects completed

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Today, during an alcohol and other drug (AOD) agency forum in Cairns, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) launched its research paper "Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Projects 1999-2000".

According to the Chair of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, "The ANCD views this report as a very important first step in describing the range, nature and geographical location of AOD specific services for Indigenous people."

The final step of this project has just commenced and it will document AOD specific projects for Indigenous people that exemplify 'best practice'. It is envisaged that these projects could be adopted by other communities.

Major Watters went on to say, "This project focused on mapping AOD specific services that target Indigenous people. Therefore, the ANCD does not claim that this report provides a complete listing of all the AOD services available to Indigenous people. As a result, I would urge those individuals that intend on using this information to familiarise themselves with the project's scope."

Professor Margaret Hamilton, ANCD Executive Member, said, "The report also complements recommendations made by the ANCD in its report on Indigenous issues in the Cape York region, which included:

- Increased emphasis on training, clinical supervision and support for AOD workers in Indigenous communities; and
- Recognition that programs need to support, complement and empower local community action."

Associate Professor Dennis Gray, from the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), which was commissioned to do the research stated, "A key component of the mapping process was ensuring that the information was broken down to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's (ATSIC) regional level, as well as the State/Territory level. By doing this, it provides Indigenous organisations and government departments with the opportunity to use the information as part of their planning processes."

Mr Scott Wilson, Director of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, and Executive Member of the ANCD said, "This report recognises the valuable work of Indigenous community-controlled organisations in dealing with substance misuse within their community. However, it also alludes to several important issues that need to be addressed in delivering AOD services to Indigenous people, which include the need for:

- Increased resources for staff training in AOD intervention projects;
- Improved coordination and consistency in the provision of funding to AOD services;
- Greater emphasis on prevention strategies; and

- More attention on broader structural issues that impact on Indigenous communities and the influence they have on substance misuse.”

Mr Wilson continued by adding, “This report and its recommendations have already proved useful to the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council for its Injecting Drug Use Survey. The results of which will be published in July.”

ANCD member, Professor Ian Webster AO, concluded by stating, “This report is an important contribution to our understanding of the services that exist in this area. However, as stated by the Chair earlier, the ANCD is conscious of the fact that this report is only the start of a process that should be conducted every 2-3 years, in order to effectively assess the delivery of AOD services to Indigenous people.”

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The Australian National Council on Drugs is the peak advisory body to Government on drug policy established by the Prime Minister in 1998.

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