

Methadone endorsed by drugs Council



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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), the key advisory board to the Federal Government on licit and illicit drug issues, today endorsed methadone as a valuable, and legitimate drug substitution therapy and confirmed its support for the National Policy on Methadone Treatment.

Discussing a report on alternative pharmacotherapies for heroin addiction, the Council recognised the importance of drug substitute programs, stressing that they should be conducted in accordance with guidelines of good clinical practice.

Chair of ANCD, Major Brian Watters, said the Council agreed that there is substantial body of research evidence that supports the WHO and the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy's endorsement of drug substitutions like methadone and buprenorphine, as legitimate treatment options for the management of heroin addiction.

"However, the Council believes that there is need for an expansion of treatment options that are grounded in evidence of effectiveness, that are adequately resourced and reflect the range of consumer preferences," he said.

"We also need to increase our capacity for services to respond to demand.

"The Council shares the Federal Government's concern about ensuring that the standards of clinical practice are maintained and reflect the intention of the National Policy on Methadone Treatment so that people are given the best treatment and care as they work their way towards a drug free status."

ANCD members also acknowledged the partnership between the Council, the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, health, law enforcement and the community sector in tackling the drug problem in Australia.

"We agreed that the notion of harm minimisation, which includes abstinence, preventing anticipated harm and actual harm, is consistent with a comprehensive approach to drug-related problems, involving a balance between demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction strategies," Major Watters said.

The Council also gave its support to the community consultations to be held in June on the National Drug Strategic Framework 1998-2002, which will guide Australia's response to the licit and illicit drug problem in the next century.

Today's meeting was the second meeting of the Council, appointed by the Prime Minister in March, to give the Federal Government expert and independent advice on drug issues in Australia.

Media Inquiries:

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