

National Council meets in Perth

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The Australian National Council on Drugs, the peak non-government advisory body to Government on drug policy, established by the Prime Minister in March 1998, recently held its latest meeting in Perth.

The meeting was officially opened by Ms Rhonda Parker, Minister Responsible for W.A. Drug Abuse Strategy and included an open discussion with members of the Council on the West Australian approach to dealing with drugs.

Chairman of the Council, Major Brian Watters, stated "The Council was very impressed with the work being done in Western Australia under the Together Against Drugs strategy and the commitment of the Government to this issue. In particular Council members noted the excellent level of involvement of families and the community in the development of drug policies and services. The work being done in the school system with a program to promote prevention and to provide education on all drugs including alcohol, tobacco and pharmaceuticals is also very commendable. In fact, all these steps are part of an approach that the Australian National Council on Drugs has been promoting for some time now."

Major Watters also confirmed that some of the discussion had centred on the level of fatal overdoses in Western Australia - "the Council welcomed the strong commitment of the West Australian Government to reducing the level of overdose deaths by introducing innovative peer based education programs and the availability of narkan in ambulances.

Mr Arthur Toon, a West Australian member of the Council also confirmed that the Council had met with a number of local agencies in an open consultation forum to discuss issues that affect those working in drug and alcohol services in West Australia. Mr Toon stated - "A number of local agencies, as well as government and law enforcement agencies were represented at the forum and the Council members were there to listen to the issues and concerns for the people of West Australia. The Council is taking its responsibility for representing the views of the non-government sector at the highest levels of drug policy very seriously. Some of the issues raised and discussed included, providing appropriate services for people affected by drug use and mental health problems, as well as, more services for indigenous people."

Mr Gino Vumbaca, Executive Officer for the Council added that local agency consultation forums will be held on a regular basis by the Council and should ensure that all members keep attuned to the needs and concerns of the drug and alcohol sector.

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