

## National Council releases Australian Drug and Alcohol Charter

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A major document for the drug and alcohol sector was released at the Thinking Drinking II Conference in Melbourne on Wednesday 28 February 2007.

Chairman, Dr. John Herron and Professor John Saunders from the Australian National Council on Drugs officially released the Charter.

This document has been developed by the Australian National Council on Drugs for the drug and alcohol sector following two rounds of extensive consultative with the sector. In developing the Charter, the ANCD sought the services of an international expert in the field of Charters who worked with the ANCD to develop the document.

The Charter outlines guiding principles, expectations and goals with regard to drugs as well as rights and responsibilities with regard to drug use and the development and implementation of policies and programs, at all community levels and for different settings and sectors. These include children and young persons, parents and care givers, drug users, health care and welfare providers, law enforcement and corrections personnel, education personnel, government and community organizations, policy makers and programs providers, and alcohol and tobacco producers, retailers and servers.

Speaking on the Charter, Dr. John Herron, said "It is the hope of the ANCD that organisations will support the Charter by registering their endorsement of it on our website.

I am pleased to announce that already a number of key stakeholders, across the AOD and related sectors have endorsed the Charter. In fact, I would like to acknowledge this support by naming some of them, they include the:

- the Royal Australasian College of Physicians;
- the Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia;
- the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies;
- the National Drug Research Institute;
- the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre;
- the Alcohol, Education and Rehabilitation Foundation;
- the Australian Drug Foundation; and
- the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association"

The ANCD also aims for the Charter to be acknowledged within international and domestic arenas to further strengthen Australia's policy response to alcohol and other drug issues.

## Key Principles of the Charter

1. Determined to give priority to protecting public health, safety and social welfare in Australia.

2. Recognising that the harm done by illicit drugs, certain pharmaceutical drugs, alcohol, tobacco and volatile substances (hereinafter called drugs) has serious consequences for public health, safety and social welfare.
3. Determined to reduce the health, social and economic burden caused by drugs.
4. Recognising that the harm caused by drugs is not proportionately distributed across all groups in the population, and that as a result of historical and socioeconomic factors, Indigenous communities and other disadvantaged groups suffer a greater burden of harm.
5. Recognising that scientific evidence has unequivocally established that drug use causes, and can contribute to, premature death, disease and disability, as well as accidents and other harms to the user, to other individuals, to family members and society as a whole.
6. Recognising the potential addictive nature of drugs and the definition of harmful use, intoxication and dependence as disorders within the International Classification of Diseases.
7. Recognising the concern people have about the harm done by drugs to individuals, families and societies.
8. Concerned about the disproportionate impacts of use experienced by some groups including Indigenous Australians and young people.
9. Concerned about the impact of advertising, promotion and sponsorship aimed at encouraging the use of drugs.
10. Recognising that public health, clinical and law enforcement approaches to drug use need to be ethical, informed by evidence, cost-effective, and formulated without undue influence from commercial and political interests or other pressure groups.
11. Recognising the special contribution that non-governmental organizations and organisations, professional bodies, women's and youth, consumer, cultural and care groups, and academic institutions, can have for drug policy and programme efforts at all community levels.
12. Recalled Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirms that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services".
13. Recalled the preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which states that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.
14. Recalled Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that it is the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
15. Recalled that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that Parties to that Convention recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.
16. Recalled the United Nations 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1972 Protocol Amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention Against Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs And Psychotropic Substances, which aim to eliminate the root causes of the problems of narcotic and psychotropic drug use, including the demand for and illicit trade in such drugs.
17. Recalled the goals of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion which calls on countries to build healthy public policy, create supportive environments, strengthen community action, develop personal skills and reorient health services.
18. Recalled the mission of Australia's National Drug Strategy 2004–2009 to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Australian society.

Organisations and individuals are invited to register their endorsement of the Charter via our website. For a

copy of the Charter and access to online endorsement of the Charter you are invited to visit the ANCD's website at [www.ancd.org.au](http://www.ancd.org.au).

*28 February 2007*

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

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