

## National Drug Council looks to 2001

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At its last meeting in 2000, the Australian National Council on Drugs, the peak advisory body to Government on drug policy, used the opportunity to preview some of its target issues for 2001.

At its meeting in Hobart, the ANCD committed itself to further investigating a number of issues.

Chairman of the Council, Major Brian Watters, stated "Alcohol and tobacco industry responsibilities, addressing the contributing factors that lead to the starting and continuation of drug use by youth, reducing heroin overdoses, and the importance of public health initiatives such as needle and syringe programs are areas which the Council is seeking to investigate this year. Add this to our already stated commitments to the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative, supporting the rural and regional drug and alcohol sector and encouraging community responses to community drug issues, and the Council certainly has its work cut out for it this year", commented Major Watters.

Major Watters continued, "Throughout its national rural and regional consultation forums, the Council has discussed a range of drug and alcohol issues with representatives from the sector. One issue the Council often heard drug and alcohol workers express their concerns about is cannabis, and the mixed messages young people seem to be getting about its health effects. In addition, the ANCD is of course aware of the recent report and recommendations by a NSW working party on the medical use of cannabis. Accordingly, the Council believes it is timely to consider the cannabis issue in depth, so as to enable it to give clear policy advice to governments".

"Of course, a continuing focus of the Council will be advising on the implementation of the Tough on Drugs Strategy and associated funding. It is important that the ANCD continues to provide independent expert advice and in particular represent the interest of the non-government sector in regard to national policy".

*15 January 2001*

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