

National survey: Drug use down but booze up continues

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After receiving a special briefing from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare at its most recent meeting in Cairns, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has welcomed the overall 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey results.

Chairman of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, said "The results clearly showed that the level of drug use in Australia has dropped significantly. Substantial increases in funding from the Federal Government's Tough on Drugs Strategy, and the commitments of some State Governments for drug and alcohol treatment, education and prevention is really starting to pay dividends".

Major Watters added, "Support from those in the power for the hard work and commitment of the people working in the frontline, is making a difference. Just as the increased investment in law enforcement has reduced the supply of drugs in this country, the increased investment in health services dealing with drug use is reducing both the demand and harm from drugs".

Whilst the survey results have shown significant decreases in illicit drug use the ANCD has noted that alcohol use continues to rise.

Professor Margaret Hamilton, an Executive member of the ANCD noted that "Advice from the World Health Organization and other bodies has recently raised concerns about the international trend of increasing alcohol promotion and consumption. Promoting alcohol use among young people is actually quite irresponsible, particularly as this survey continues to show that over 25% of all people aged 14 years or more are victims of alcohol abuse each year. The alcohol industry needs to accept a much greater level of responsibility for the significant damage its products are doing in the community."

Major Watters also said, "This survey provides all of us with the results to forge ahead and to show the community that the Australian effort on drugs is at the forefront of best practice. The only caution I will echo at this point is the need to maintain the commitment, especially in regard to funding. These gains in reducing drug use could easily be lost if we don't continue to expand our efforts to make treatment and education more available. It is a message the ANCD has resolved to take to the highest offices".

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

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