



NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DRUG AND ALCOHOL COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

The National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) welcomes the release of the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2014* report by the Productivity Commission.

One of the key indicators linked to safe and supportive communities is alcohol and other drug use and harm. What the report highlights is that there is a lack of reduction in the levels of alcohol and other drug use and resulting harm among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Given the strong link that is known to exist between harmful alcohol and other drug use, mental health, suicide and violence NIDAC argues that if governments seriously want to make a difference to supporting families and making communities safer it is imperative that more be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Another prominent indicator in the report is imprisonment and juvenile detention. NIDAC has been concerned for some time about the continuing increase in incarceration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This report backs up NIDAC's concern by indicating a 57 per cent increase in the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults incarcerated between 2000-2013. This is even more startling when compared to non-Indigenous Australian rates which have remained fairly constant. Consequently we are now seeing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and juveniles being imprisoned at 13 times and 24 times the rate respectively than non-Indigenous Australians.

With many people in prison because of circumstances invariably involved with alcohol and other drugs it is imperative that governments place a greater focus on addressing harmful alcohol and other drug use.

It is about time that harmful alcohol and drug use received the attention that is needed. NIDAC looks forward to working with Government to explore ways of addressing harmful drug and alcohol use and to improving the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.

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