

The 2009 Federal Budget - 14 May 2009

A Welcome Commitment to Drug & Alcohol Services in Tough Times



The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has welcomed the Federal Government's 2009 Budget commitment to maintain funding for the comprehensive range of drug and alcohol and related services and programs.

Dr John Herron, the Chairman of the ANCD stated "The ANCD is very pleased to see the significant level of funding that is provided to address drug and alcohol issues has been maintained and in some areas enhanced. The budget clearly recognises the effective contribution made by health and law enforcement services and programs across the country. It is particularly pleasing to see an ongoing and expanded commitment to addressing Indigenous health inequality. The ANCD will continue to work closely with the Government to ensure that these current and new initiatives continue to achieve the goals of the National Drug Strategy."

The 2009–10 Federal Budget included the following funding announcements:

Prevention

Confirmation of a commitment at COAG to fund the single largest investment ever made in health promotion in Australia – focused on tackling the health problems caused by tobacco, obesity and excessive consumption of alcohol.

In partnership with the states and territories, the Australian Government will invest \$872.1 million over six years in preventing lifestyle risks that cause chronic disease.

The agreement will also establish a national preventative health agency to advise Australian Governments on preventative health programs – as suggested by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, the Preventative Health Taskforce and the 2020 Summit.

Indigenous Programs

There will be \$131.1 million over three years for continued regional reform of remote Indigenous primary health care services in the Northern Territory (NT).

Some specific elements of the initiative include:

- continuation of the Remote Area Health Corps, which will deliver and support more doctors, nurses and other health professionals;
- continuation of alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

Addressing disadvantage in remote Australia

- \$807.4 million to continue our commitment to closing the gap in the NT and support the safety of women and children, including \$156.6 million for remote policing and substance abuse initiatives, training for new NT police, five permanent police stations and the continued operation of 10 existing stations.
- \$9.0 million to establish a Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services who will work across all agencies to drive improved service delivery and cut through administrative barriers to deliver practical results for Indigenous Australians.
- \$5.5 million in continued funding for the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force to continue its investigations into the nature and extent of violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities.
- \$3.7 million in additional funding as part of the \$30 million Indigenous Communications Program to provide community phones, and in partnership with the states and territories, public internet access facilities and computer training for remote Indigenous communities.
- \$1.5 million for a national Closing the Gap Clearinghouse to collect and disseminate vital evidence on best practice and success factors to identify what is working best.

Closing the Gap – Northern Territory

Remote policing and substance abuse

The Government will provide \$156.6 million over three years for remote policing and substance abuse initiatives. This will provide five new permanent police stations, operational costs to support the 60 additional police placed in the NT and training for new NT Police officers. It will also fund alcohol management plans, signage, licensing inspectors and other activities to reduce substance abuse.

Community law and justice

\$80.2 million over three years will be provided for a range of services to make communities safer and support the justice system including continuing night patrol services in 81 NT communities;

Community safety

The Government will provide \$28.4 million over three years to support youth projects and services to promote positive behaviours among young people in consultation with Indigenous communities.

Enhancing the National Prescribing Service

The Government is expanding the work of the National Prescribing Service (NPS), further enhancing patient safety and quality of care. This will enable the NPS to continue to support the health professionals in safely and appropriately prescribing medicines.

The Government will spend \$21 million over four years to conduct campaigns with health professionals to improve prescribing of medicines which may include antibiotics, anti-psychotics, pain killers and hypno-sedatives.

Sports Anti-Doping Framework

There will be an extra \$21.1 million over four years for the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) to ensure athletes are subject to the same anti-doping rules, sanctions and procedures – both domestically and internationally. It will enable ASADA to meet its international obligations, as specified under the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport, and address increases in workloads caused by changes to the World Anti-Doping Code, which took effect from 1 January 2009. The additional funding will bring the Government's commitment to eliminating doping in sport to \$54.5 million over four years.

In summing up tonight's Federal Budget the ANCD Executive Director, Mr Vumbaca said

"Everyone recognises the tough economic times surrounding this budget. The fact that there was a commitment to maintain the hundreds of millions of ongoing funding for service delivery and programs that are addressing substance misuse is a vote of confidence for all the sectors involved in this work. Savings from the drug and alcohol portfolio were limited to less than \$25million over 5 years with savings being made in some minor policy support areas of psychostimulants, co-morbidity and diversion. The effect of these savings will be minimal and not impact at all on the supply, demand and harm reduction programs currently in place. As always the ANCD will work with governments and communities to ensure the provision of any necessary advice and support for the sector to continue to address the many challenges that we will face in the future both in Australia and regionally"

14 May 2009

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

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