



“the leading voice in Indigenous drug and alcohol policy advice”

**NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DRUG AND ALCOHOL COMMITTEE
MEDIA RELEASE**

Fremantle to host the Second National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference – which gets under way tomorrow.

The theme of the Conference is “Beyond 2012: Leading The Way To Action”. It will be held at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle from 6 – 8 June.

The National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC), which is a committee of the Australian National Council on Drugs has organised the Conference that will see hundreds of experts gathering for the only national conference on drug and alcohol issues affecting Indigenous Australians.

The NIDAC Chair, Associate Professor Ted Wilkes said, *“This is a very important Conference because it is the only Conference that brings together leading experts and practitioners to discuss and share information on addressing the harmful use of alcohol and other drugs amongst Indigenous Australians. This is quite simply a significant public health issue that incurs a major social and economic cost to individuals, families, communities and the nation.”*

Following on from the first National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference in 2010, this second Conference will highlight how Indigenous Australians and the drug and alcohol sector are more than capable of leading the way in addressing the very harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs and the clear associated harms among Indigenous Australians.

We will examine and share new ideas that need to be taken up and supported, to make a bigger difference. We will also be showcasing innovative programs that are helping in a huge way.

Our focus will be on issues like supply reduction strategies, including the availability of alcohol, alternatives to incarceration and culturally sensitive law enforcement. We will also be looking at harm reduction strategies and early intervention programs.

Demand reduction strategies, including alternatives to alcohol and other drug use will also be a primary focus, as will the factors that facilitate the provision of effective alcohol and other drugs services to Indigenous Australians with a professionally trained and supported workforce.”

Keynote speakers include **Linda Forrest** who works for the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Health Promotion Team in Queensland - she has extensively dealt with alcohol and drug matters.

Noel Hayman who is the Clinical Director for the Inala Indigenous Health Service in Queensland was one of the first Aboriginal students to complete the medical curriculum at the University of Queensland. He has been extensively involved in improving Indigenous access to mainstream health services and is an Associate Professor with the University of Queensland's School of Medicine.

Another expert includes **Alex McIntosh** who works in Western Australia with the Midwest Community Drug Service Team, helping Aboriginal clients and communities to seek alternatives to alcohol and drugs. Alex is currently involved with an extensive corrective service program helping Indigenous men to manage anger as well as substance abuse.

WA's **Helen Milroy** is also speaking. She is the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health in WA. She worked as a consultant in childhood sexual abuse at the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and is currently Winthrop Professor and Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health at the University of Western Australia.

Paraire Huata from New Zealand will also be at the event. Paraire works mainly with Maori men and their families, many of whom have had a long history of incarceration.

The second National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference will feature two major panel sessions – one on youth (“Making Our Voices Heard”), which will encourage discussion on resilience, being a role model and different views on alcohol and other drug use by Indigenous young people with a focus on ways to make safe choices. The other major panel session will be on justice reinvestment (“Turning An Idea Into Reality”), which will examine how funds can be better used to help tackle problems in communities and avoid people unnecessarily ending up in jail.

NIDAC's position paper on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) will also be launched at the Conference. This paper provides an overview of FASD in Australia as well as recommendations on how best to address this issue.

Three major National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Awards will also be inaugurated at the Conference Dinner – an award for excellence for a male worker and an award for excellence for a female worker, as well as an encouragement award for a worker in the sector

NIDAC is also launching the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Honour Roll for people who have made a long term outstanding contribution to reducing the harms associated with alcohol and other drug use among Indigenous people.

Full details on the Conference can be found at: www.nidaconference.com.au

National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee:

The National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) was established by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) to provide independent expert advice on addressing Indigenous drug and alcohol issues in Australia to the ANCD and Government.