

Department of Education, Science and Training Submission for the Inquiry into the Impact of Illicit Drug Use on Families

- The Australian Government is committed to providing safe and supportive environments for all school students. Through the National School Drug Education Strategy (NSDES), \$47.5 million has been provided from 1999-2000 to 2007-2008 for school drug education. This funding is directed towards fostering the capacity of school communities to provide safe and supportive school environments for all Australian school students, enhancing school drug education programmes and the management of drug related issues and incidents in schools.
- Significant advancements have been made through the NSDES in developing and implementing initiatives and resources aimed at building resilience in young people and giving them the skills to make positive life choices. Research clearly demonstrates that young people who have strong relationships – with their friends, family, school and within their community – are more resilient and less likely to engage in a range of high-risk behaviours, including taking drugs.
- *REDI – Resilience Education and Drug Information* – suite of resources provide opportunities for young people to develop skills such as social competence, autonomy, problem solving, coping strategies and improving their self esteem. They provide teachers with quality activities that reinforce resilience messages about belonging and being connected and outline lessons for developing resilience skills such as making decisions; thinking and feeling positively about oneself; being assertive and managing relationships.
- The REDI resources consist of *All REDI for the Early Years of Schooling; One and All- Middle Primary; On The Move-Upper Primary; My TV-Lower Secondary; On the Edge-Upper Secondary; REDI for Parents*; and professional development materials for teachers and the school community. Further information can be found at [www.redi.gov.au](http://www.redi.gov.au).
- The *REDI for Parents* initiative represents a major national investment in providing quality information resources and effective strategies to inform parents and families about the issues surrounding the use of licit and illicit drugs. It provides strategies on building resilience at an individual, family, school and community level. Further work will be undertaken with the Australian Council for State School Organisations in 2007 to work with a representative selection of ten schools and their communities to implement *REDI for Parents* leading to documentation and publication of case study best practice examples.
- DEST is undertaking a review of NSDES resources which is due to conclude in October 2007. It will examine the impact of the NSDES resources and initiatives on the knowledge and skills of teachers using the resources; improvements in teaching practices and changes in practice over time; improvements in student learning outcomes; and level of understanding of resilience based approach by educators to school drug education.
- In 2000-2003 the Australian Government funded the Local School/Community Drug Summits which were the major vehicle by which schools engaged parents and the local community in discussions with young people about drug-related issues. Summits covered a wide variety of activities including parent and community forums, information evenings, quiz nights, student presentations and presentations by experts in the field.
- Building on these drug summits, an additional \$6 million is available to 2007-08 for drug education forums to be conducted in every school to inform students about drugs, drawing on peer participation. The forums also involve parents and school community members.
- DEST is currently developing a website to educate students, teachers and parents on the dangers of psychostimulant use, including methamphetamines and ecstasy and related drugs (ERDs). This project responds to recent research commissioned by DEST, which identified a lack of school-based materials for students and teachers on ERDs and methamphetamines.
- DEST continues to work closely with other Australian Government agencies as well as state and territory education jurisdictions to deliver effective school drug education and to prevent the harm that substance abuse can cause to young people and their families.