

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH, STATES AND TERRITORIES UNDER THE NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY.**

### **4.1 ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

The Commonwealth Government has a dual role under the National Drug Strategy. Firstly, it is responsible for providing national leadership in Australia's response to reducing drug-related harm. The Department of Health and Aged Care is the Commonwealth Agency with overall responsibility for coordination of the National Drug Strategy and related programs.

The National Drug Strategy Unit, located within the Department's Population Health Division, has primary carriage at the Commonwealth level of activities under the National Drug Strategic Framework. In relation to the Framework, the Unit has five primary responsibilities:

- ensuring national policy development, coordination and management, in conjunction with the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, the Australian National Council on Drugs, the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, the national expert advisory committees and the community-based sector;
- managing the workplans of, and providing policy assistance and executive support to, the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, and the national expert advisory committees;
- monitoring and evaluating the impact of the National Drug Strategy and any changing trends in order to provide timely advice to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, the Australian National Council on Drugs and the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs;
- responding to identified areas of need by commissioning work that is best done at the national level; and
- providing advice on the policy related aspects of Australia's international treaty obligations.

Secondly, the Commonwealth Government has responsibility for implementing its own policies and programs that contribute to the reduction of drug related harm. Examples of such policies and programs conducted under the auspices of the health portfolio are outlined in Chapter 5. It is important to note however that a range of other Commonwealth Government agencies have responsibility for policies and programs that may impact on the demand for, or supply of, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. These include:

- The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, which is responsible for the development and implementation of the National School Drug Education Strategy, which will build on and enhance existing State and Territory initiatives;

- The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, which, in addition to its role in contributing to the development of national drug policy (principally in the area of illicit drugs and supply reduction), monitors adherence to international drug treaties and develops and implements policy in the area of crime prevention, money laundering, extradition and mutual assistance. It also coordinates the National Crime Prevention Strategy, which supports research into links between illicit drug use and crime and strategies relating to prevention of domestic violence, crime prevention, and the relationship between young people and crime;
- The Australian Customs Service, which enforces the Government's controls on illicit drugs and controlled substances;
- The Australian Federal Police, which has primary responsibility for investigating offences associated with the importation of illicit drugs into Australia and for disrupting the international supply of illicit drugs; and
- The National Crime Authority, which works to counteract organised criminal activity and reduce the impact of such activity on the Australian community.

It is anticipated that the Attorney-General's Department, in consultation with Commonwealth law enforcement agencies, and DETYA will make their own submissions to the Inquiry.

#### **4.1.1 National Illicit Drug Strategy**

While the Commonwealth Government has a dual role under the National Drug Strategy, the two functions are not mutually exclusive and in fact are often complementary. For example, the National Illicit Drug Strategy "*Tough on Drugs*", which was launched by the Prime Minister in November 1997, started out as a Commonwealth Government strategy. However, through the Council of Australian Governments, States and Territories embraced the Strategy and agreed that it would become the next major phase of the National Drug Strategy. As such, the National Illicit Drug Strategy provides a clear demonstration of how the development of Commonwealth policies and programs can also provide national leadership, thus fulfilling both of the Commonwealth's roles under the National Drug Strategy.

Since its inception the Commonwealth Government has allocated \$516 million over four years to the National Illicit Drug Strategy (NIDS) for a range of supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction measures. Many aspects of the NIDS have been developed in consultation with State and Territory Governments, in recognition of their important role in the delivery of programs to address drug related harm. A brief description of the measures under the NIDS is provided below (more detail in respect of the demand reduction and harm reduction measures is provided in Chapter 5).

#### **4.1.1.1 Demand Reduction Measures**

The NIDS includes a range of demand reduction and harm reduction measures, totalling \$303 million.

##### ***Prevention***

- \$8.8 million (includes diversion funds) for the Community Partnerships Initiative to encourage quality practice in community action to prevent illicit drug use and to build on existing activity occurring across Australia. The Initiative is modelled on the World Health Organisation's "*Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse*".
- \$2.5 million to establish a national drug information service to disseminate drug information to the general community, including parents, schools, health professionals and health care facilities. The Australian Drug Foundation has been awarded the contract to deliver the service which is expected to commence in late 2000.
- \$27.3 million has been allocated to the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) for the development and implementation of a National Schools Drug Education Strategy (\$18 million) and associated measures, agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in April 1999, for managing drug related incidents in schools (\$9.3million).
- \$28.1 million (includes diversion funds) for the National Illicit Drugs Campaign to educate the community about the dangers of illicit drug use and raise awareness about primary prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The campaign will also target different illicit substances.

##### ***Treatment***

- \$60.8 million for expanding and upgrading existing non-government treatment services to strengthen the capacity of non-government organisations to achieve improved service outcomes and to increase the number of treatment places available.
- \$2.2 million to provide support for a range of activities aimed at identification, promotion and dissemination of best practice in treatment of illicit drug dependence. In addition, \$2.2 million has been identified for enhanced activities in evaluation, quality assurance and outcome monitoring in relation to existing treatment practices.

##### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

- \$3.0 million towards projects to train and better equip front-line workers (including General Practitioners, hospital staff and police officers) who come into contact with drug users or at risk groups. These professionals are well placed to provide advice and information about counselling and treatment groups.
- \$1.3 million for the national evaluation, monitoring and subsequent dissemination of the outcomes of the trials of alternative treatment modalities, with a view to developing models of best practice and disseminating outcomes.

- \$3.6 million for an illicit drugs reporting and information database to establish a system for monitoring demand for and usage of illicit drugs in Australia, and the harms arising from use. The database will facilitate evidence-based decision making and act as a strategic early warning system to alert governments to emerging drug problems.
- \$3.6 million for the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) and supporting advisory structure under the National Drug Strategy.

### ***Research***

- \$3.9 million for the National Health and Medical Research Council to undertake an expanded program of interdisciplinary research to achieve innovation in the prevention and treatment of illicit drug use.

#### **4.1.1.2 National Drug Diversion Initiative**

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Health and Law Enforcement Ministers have agreed on a national approach to the development of a drug diversion initiative. A total of \$221 million over four years has been allocated to the diversion program and supporting initiatives, of which \$158 million is being administered by the Department of Health and Aged Care for a range of measures, including:

- \$111.5 million to support the diversion of illicit drug users from the criminal justice system into education and treatment, including the establishment of assessment services and additional treatment places.

### ***Supporting Initiatives***

- \$1.2 million for the development and dissemination of cannabis cessation strategies for adults and adolescents.
- \$17.6 million for increased education, counselling and referral services provided through community-based programmes.
- \$10.6 million for augmentation of the existing community wide education and information campaign on illicit drugs, including increased media activity aimed at increasing parents' and the broader community's awareness and knowledge about illicit drugs and how to access information.
- \$4.0 million for additional funding for the Community Partnerships Initiative, which provides grants to communities to undertake projects aimed at preventing illicit drug use and harm associated with such use.
- \$12.9 million for the diversification of existing needle and syringe programs by increasing the number of pharmacies and other outlets distributing needles and syringes.
- \$0.252 million for funding for research to investigate barriers and incentives to illicit drug users accessing and remaining in treatment.

- \$11.3 million to strengthen and support families coping with illicit drugs. To assist communities establish support and advice mechanisms for families; provide outreach services to link and coordinate pathways to health related counselling services; and link with other NIDS services.

Further information on the Diversion Programme is provided under section 5.4 “Treatment, including diversion to treatment” in chapter 5.

#### **4.1.1.3 Supply Reduction Measures**

A range of supply reduction measures have been funded under the National Illicit Drug Strategy, including:

- enhanced intelligence and cargo examination capacity for the Australian Customs Service;
- increased surveillance by the Australian Customs Service in the Torres Strait;
- improved x-ray technology for the Australian Customs Service;
- establishment of 10 Australian Federal Police mobile strike teams to assist in targeting major drug syndicates operating in Australia;
- creation of a Law Enforcement Cooperation Program designed to assist overseas law enforcement agencies improve their capacity to investigate drug trafficking;
- expansion of the Australian Federal Police’s overseas liaison network;
- development of a heroin signature program which will help trace distribution networks in Australia;
- enhanced technical capacity for the Australian Federal Police and the National Crime Authority, enabling additional evidence collection via telephone interception;
- enhanced capacity for the National Crime Authority to target south-east Asian organised crime, in particular heroin importation;
- establishment of the secretariat to the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering to promote and improve measures for combating international money laundering;
- greater regulatory and analytical capability for the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre;
- enhancement of Commonwealth law enforcement agencies’ communication and information technology capabilities; and
- research to provide a more accurate and targeted picture of the relationship between drugs and crime in Australia.

## **4.2 ROLE OF STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS**

Under the National Drug Strategy State and Territory governments are responsible for providing leadership within their respective jurisdictions. They are responsible for policy development, implementation and evaluation and for the delivery of police, health (including drug treatment) and education services to reduce drug related harm.

Example of other activities for which State and Territory Governments are responsible under the National Drug Strategy include:

- developing and implementing their own drug strategies from the perspective of law enforcement and population health and based on local priorities;
- controlling the supply of illicit drugs through both specialist drug law enforcement units and general duties police officers;
- enforcing the regulation of pharmaceutical drugs;
- enforcing laws regulating the consumption and availability of alcohol and developing and enforcing legislation relating to tobacco;
- implementing harm reduction strategies to prevent drink driving;
- providing public sector health services or funding community based organisations to provide drug prevention and treatment programs;
- regulating and administering the delivery of methadone services and needle and syringe programs;
- developing effective and comprehensive professional education and training, research and evaluation strategies, in close cooperation with other jurisdictions so as to achieve consistency;
- assessing measures that allow police to exercise discretion in diverting drug users away from the criminal justice system into appropriate treatment options; and
- establishing an appropriate public policy framework to deal with drug use and drug-related harm in areas such as housing, school-based drug education, criminal justice and juvenile justice and liquor licensing.

In addition, as part of its consideration of the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative, the Council of Australian Governments, at their meeting of 9 April 1999 noted that drug use in prisons is common, and a large proportion of prisoners are incarcerated for drug related crime. To prevent re-offending and to promote public health, states and territories (who have primary responsibility for prisons) agreed to develop and fund program to:

- intercept the supply of drugs to prisons and be tough on dealers within prisons; and
- develop and trial diversionary treatment programs within the gaol system so that dependent users can break their addiction.