

## **City Of Perth Drug Strategies And Initiatives**

### **Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs**

### **Inquiry into Substance Abuse in Australian Communities**

#### **1.0 GENERAL**

The City of Perth covers an area of 8.75 square kilometres with a daily population of over 100,000 and a steadily increasing permanent residential population of over 6,000. Although by world standards Perth is a very safe and livable city, like any city it is affected criminal activity and antisocial behaviour associated with abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs. Minimising the occurrence and impact of these activities is a major objective of all levels of government.

The City has recently developed a draft Safety and Security Action Plan which addresses problems of drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution and the disposal of injecting equipment.

The City has been working closely with other levels of government to ensure an integrated approach. It is a member of the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) who have adopted a draft agreement to set up a co-operative network between Australian capital cities on illicit drugs strategies and action plans. The City is also working within the framework of the WA Drug Abuse Strategy established by the WA government.

#### **2.0 CITY OF PERTH INITIATIVES**

## **2.1 Role of the City of Perth in Creating a Safe City**

*The City of Perth has an important leadership role in developing a safe city, and by initiating and participating in a wide range of programs in partnership with the community and other agencies which address crime prevention and promote an economically and socially healthy city.*

The City has a major role in encouraging a civil society with a strong social, cultural and community framework. This is based on the premise that the safest communities are not those with the most police and prisons but those with the strongest community structures, social institutions, families and economic opportunities. The City provides major expenditure in fostering social and cultural development through sponsorship and of arts, cultural and community programs, in its role as the capital city local authority.

## **2.2 Draft Safety and Security Action Plan 2000-2004**

The City has recently developed a draft Safety and Security Action Plan 2000-2004 which identifies crime trends and issues in the city, including problems of alcohol and drug abuse. Whilst there has been a general reduction in crime of 10%-20% p.a. over the last three years there has been an increase in crimes against the person (such as assault and robbery) as well as antisocial behaviour. The action plan identifies a range of initiatives to prevent, deter and respond to crime and antisocial behaviour including illicit drug use and street prostitution.

Specific initiatives in relation to illicit drugs include:

- establishing a dedicated liaison person within the City to liaise with other agencies to progress drug strategies; and
- developing an in-house drugs taskforce to provide a more coordinated City response to drug use issues.

## **2.3 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)**

There are 91 cameras throughout the City centre, Northbridge and some car parks representing the largest system of any city in Australia. These cameras are staffed twenty four hours a day by City of Perth Surveillance Officers. The service has been effective in identifying crimes (including drug dealers), antisocial behaviour and medical emergencies. A number of arrests have been made as a result. Three additional surveillance officers are being appointed the 2000-01 financial year.

## **2.4 Security Officers**

The City currently has eight security officers providing on-street security and public assistance. This will be expanded to eleven officers this year to provide an increased security presence in growing residential areas such as East Perth.

## **2.5 Citywatch Police Post**

The City operates a joint facility with the WA Police Services which is located at the Railway Station. This facility accommodates the surveillance room of the CCTV.

## **2.6 Youth Officer**

The City has recently appointed a Youth Officer to develop programs and events as an early intervention measure with young people, particularly involving youth 'at risk' in the City.

## **2.7 Syringe Disposal**

The collection and disposal used syringes found on City of Perth property is done by several units including Area Maintenance, Community Services, Compliance and Property Management. Proposed initiatives in the draft Safety and Security Action Plan include:

- providing sharps/ needle disposal units in all drug hot spots, including all public toilets and on private property at the request of property owners;
- identifying central point of contact at the City for collation of statistics, reporting, collection and referral, particularly in relation to injecting equipment;
- auditing, and make improvements to, drug hot spots for example, lighting, landscaping, encouraging appropriate land uses/ activity to provide greater on-street surveillance; and
- work with other agencies to find a workable solution to areas affected by street prostitution and drug use.

## **2.8 Noongar Community Patrol**

The City has contracted the services of an Aboriginal community patrol to provide a street based early intervention service with Aboriginal youth. The aim of the service is to de-escalate potentially confronting situations. The service operates four nights a week primarily in the central city and Northbridge areas. The City of Perth contributed \$49,900 in 1999/2000 to the service which is a joint initiative with the Aboriginal Advancement Council and others. Increased funding is budgeted for the 2000/2001 period. The service also refers people with particular problems to other services including the Noongar Aboriginal Substance Abuse Service and the Department of Family and Children's Services.

## **2.9 Eyes and Ears Service**

The City has commenced an “Eyes and Ears” programme in which City staff working on the streets report any suspicious persons or activities to the Police District Intelligence Unit. At present there are approximately 40 parking inspectors, six security and ten area maintenance staff involved.

## **2.10 Monitoring and Review**

Safety and Security Sub-Committee of the City of Perth Council. This committee is comprised of Councillors and Senior Management and meets quarterly to monitor and review the safety and security of the City.

## **2.11 WA Police Service Joint Initiatives**

This includes the joint facility of the City Watch police post and regular workshops to develop joint initiatives. The City of Perth funds one vehicle and five mountain bikes for use by the WA Police Service.

## **3.0 COUNCIL OF CAPITAL CITY LORD MAYORS (CCCLM)**

### **3.1 CCCLM Resolution on Drugs 1998**

In 1998 a Drugs Advisory Committee of the CCCLM, chaired by Professor David Pennington, was established to advise the Lord Mayors on how drug issues could be addressed in their cities. A draft Resolution on Drugs was prepared as a framework for common action. The resolution highlighted the major problems illicit drugs are having on capital cities including:

- a growing crime rate due to drug dependent people trying to fund the purchase of drugs;
- young men and women working in the sex industry to fund their habits
- drug users trading or injecting in streets and leaving syringes in public places;
- spread of infections such as HIV AIDS and Hepatitis C; and
- growing number of deaths due to drug overdose.

Specific actions of the draft Capital Cities Resolution on Drugs (July 1998) included:

- coordination of policies concerning drug related issues and the maintenance of a drug advisory group in each capital city;
- gaining increased national and state funding to develop local strategies aimed at reducing the impacts of illicit drugs;
- gaining increased resources to expand treatment and rehabilitation facilities;
- increased national and state funding for scientific research on the drug issue;
- explore new approaches to prevention, dependency and treatment; and

- design and management of the physical environment of cities to minimise crime.

The City of Perth supported the draft resolution as a framework for action but indicated it did not support initiatives which could be represented “partial normalisation (greater acceptance) of drug abuse”. These included:

- clinical trials of heroin;
- the provision of safe, supervised places for injecting drugs; and
- the decriminalisation of possession of small amounts of marijuana.

The CCCLM are committed to harm minimisation as a principle, recognising the serious impact of drugs on cities, particularly capital cities and the importance of working on an integrated national drug strategy that is undertaken in the broader context of city well-being.

### **3.2 Current Membership of the CCCLM Drugs Advisory Committee**

The current membership of the Drugs Advisory Committee approved by the Capital City Lord Mayors comprises:

- Professor Margaret Hamilton (chairperson) Director, Turning Alcohol and Drug Centre, Melbourne, and a member of senior advisory bodies on drug abuse both nationally and in Victoria.;
- Professor Ross Homel, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University;
- A/Professor Steven Allsop, Director Clinical Education and Training, Next Step Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services, Perth;
- Father Peter Norden, Director Jesuit Social Services Melbourne; and
- Dr. Alex Wodak, Director of Alcohol and Drug Service, St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney.

Any approaches to the CCCLM Drugs Advisory Committee should be made through the CCCLM secretariat at the City of Adelaide.

### **3.3 Role of the Drugs Advisory Committee (DAC)**

The Committee provides strategic advice to the CCCLM, focussing on the opportunities for greater involvement of local government in the national and state context as well as provide support to relevant capital cities on developing and implementing drug strategies. The Committee will further develop the strategies outlined in the Resolution on Drugs, with particular emphasis on assisting people to “get off drugs”.

### **3.4 Initiatives of the Drugs Advisory Committee**

Current initiatives include supporting a feasibility study for an overdose recovery service for severely intoxicated young people and a diversionary program for drug users. The Drugs Advisory Committee are currently

developing information to help Capital Cities develop and implement drug strategies. A future conference on drug policy is being discussed.

Assisted by the Drugs Advisory Committee the CCCLM is currently working to develop a strategic alliance with the National Drug Strategy, especially the **Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS)** and the **Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD)**.

The MCDS brings together National, State and Territory Ministers for health and law enforcement and is the peak policy and decision making body in relation to licit and illicit drugs in Australia. The IGCD is responsible for policy and program co-ordination and is made up of senior government officers representing health and law enforcement.

Following a meeting with the IGCD in June, the CCCLM will be invited to comment on the National Drug Action Plans. The CCCLM have highlighted their role in providing leadership in managing and responding to drug issues from the local government perspective.

The WA representatives on the IGCD are:

- Tim Atherton, Assistant Commissioner WA Police Service;
- Terry Murphy, Executive Director WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office; and
- Kevin Larkins, WA Health Department.

#### **4.0 WA STATE GOVERNMENT DRUG ABUSE STRATEGY**

The City has strongly endorsed the WA Government policy and action plan *Together Against Drugs 1999 - 2001*". The strategy emphasises the need for a holistic approach and is based on two key principles:-

- (i) Opposition to drug abuse, including strategies to reduce the demand for drugs and supply of drugs; and
- (ii) Harm reduction strategies which recognise the need for strategies to reduce the risks and harm to those continuing to use drugs as well as the general community. The State Government recognises the need to ensure that these strategies do not promote or encourage drug use. It also aims to avoid the potential for normalisation or a greater acceptance of drug use in the wider community.

The key developments for the *Together Against Drugs* include:

- a comprehensive range of diversion strategies to compel offenders into treatment;
- a series of initiatives under the banner of Working in Partnerships with Parents;

- a substantial legislative program covering penalties, dealing with intoxication and confiscation of proceeds of crime;
- initiatives tackling each of the specific legal and illicit drugs;
- expanding the availability of new pharmacotherapies for heroin dependence - naltrexone and buprenorphine; and
- a Western Australian research program with a particular focus on prevention.

#### **4.1 Drug Service Teams**

The WA Drug Abuse Strategy has established four Community Drug Service Teams to provide education, counselling and support services in the metropolitan area. A fifth drug service team has recently been announced for the inner city of Perth. This will provide:

- general alcohol and drug counselling services, including support for police and court diversion programs;
- support to other service providers to manage alcohol and other drug problems through education and training, consultation and shared case management; and
- support to the local community to prevent alcohol and other drug problems.

#### **5.0 CITY OF PERTH INVOLVEMENT IN DIRECT SERVICE PROVISION**

The City is not directly involved in, and does not foresee a primary role in drug and alcohol service provision. The Perth central area is already the location of a wide range of health, welfare and youth services and facilities, including mobile needle exchange units, early intervention services, as well as treatment, advisory and counselling services.

The challenge is one of ensuring effective and timely service provision across a large number of government and non-government service providers rather than their provision per se. Of particular concern is the need for more “out of hours” services. The Noongar Patrol and Mission Australia’s “On Track” program (a sobering up facility for intoxicated youth) operate mainly at night, however, many other referral services are not available at this time. The WA Police Service is frequently required to provide care and management to fill this gap.

The City therefore perceives its primary role to be:

- providing a safe, attractive and livable city environment
- leadership and co-ordination e.g. strategic planning at the local level
- developing partnerships and joint initiatives e.g. with health, drug, youth, aboriginal, crime prevention agencies and other local authorities to address drug abuse problems and related crime prevention issues.

- advocacy and support, particularly to highlight service gaps and support new initiatives.