



HOUSE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 8 September 2003

Chair: Mrs Kay Hull, MP
Deputy: Mrs Julia Irwin, MP

Substance Abuse report makes 128 recommendations to government

The House of Representatives Family and Community Affairs Committee have released the final report of a three-year inquiry into substance abuse in Australian communities.

The 353-page, 11-chapter report, titled *Road to Recovery*, makes 128 recommendations. The committee believes adoption of these recommendations (*on inquiry website – see link over*) will critically improve the way in which we, as a community, deal with substance abuse and misuse.

The inquiry examined the social and economic costs of the abuse of both **legal** and **illicit** substances.

The report makes recommendations in the areas of:

- **Alcohol misuse** (10 recommendations);
- **Tobacco control** (8 recommendations);
- **Road trauma** (12 recommendations);
- **Workplace safety and productivity** (8 recommendations);
- **Crime, violence (including domestic violence) and law enforcement** (30 recommendations);
- **Health care** (14 recommendations);
- **Family and community relationships** (18 recommendations);
- **Illicit drug use** (21 recommendations); and
- **The National Drug Strategy** (7 recommendations).

Releasing the report, Committee Chair Kay Hull said:

“If implemented the recommendations in this report will see Australian communities far better equipped to deal with substance misuse, through targeted comprehensive and well resourced early intervention programs aimed at communities and the education and judicial systems.

“The committee have highlighted the need for family inclusive treatment programs that have been clearly identified as best practice models. These models should be nationally consistent and must be assessed for competency in real outcomes prior to being eligible for State and Commonwealth funding and they should report annually to their parliaments against their targets.

“In addition the committee supports a nationally agreed curriculum and accreditation system for training and development of all of those who are involved in delivery of services including health and senior professionals.

“The committee are concerned about the current practice of methadone parking and have made strong recommendations to determine the effects of long term methadone maintenance, including the cost and impact on the workplace, community and family.

“The dangers of cannabis use were also of concern to the committee, particularly after receiving evidence that indicated cannabis use was considered to be harmless by a great number of the Australian public. With evidence from the 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey stating that cannabis was offered or available to almost a quarter of Australians surveyed and to nearly half the 14-29 year olds surveyed, the committee believes it is vital that treatments for cannabis dependence be developed and that research be undertaken to determine the nature of the links between cannabis use and mental health and opioid or other drug use.

“Effective and proven diversion programs in the judicial system are all important tools in dealing with abuse sufferers and in particular the ability to identify drug users or those young people at risk of substance abuse through their general and associated behaviour that may lead to them presenting to the criminal justice or welfare system.

.../2 (more follows)

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“Establishment of independent drug free units in correctional centres were supported by the committee, wherein numeracy, literacy and life skills should be provided in an educational format.”

The committee had a range of personal views on the trialling of naltrexone implants particularly in prisons. Mrs Hull said:

“The naltrexone treatment programs that the committee witnessed were very impressive, and the committee agreed that these programs, supported by holistic support services, including housing and education, are a valuable form of treatment that should be more readily available. The committee also noted that naltrexone should be subsidised by the Commonwealth for drug abuse as it is currently subsidised for alcohol abuse.

“Finally, the committee supports the replacement of a focus on harm minimisation in the National Drug Strategy with a focus on harm prevention. The committee also suggests that a prerequisite for continuing and new funding of research projects be the requirement to produce evidence of proven benefits of the research on those affected by substance abuse and misuse.”

118 of the 128 recommendations in the report are unanimous. The report also includes:

- a ‘qualifying statement’ signed by five committee members, which ‘clarifies’ their position of opposition to trials involving illicit drugs;
- a dissenting report from two members. Their dissenting report dissents from all or part of 10 of the 128 recommendations in the report, and one conclusion;
- two other dissents, which dissent from fewer recommendations (7 and 2 respectively).

The inquiry started in March 2000 and issued a discussion paper in September 2001. It was readopted in mid-2002, at the request on the Minister for Health, Senator Patterson, with the intent of publishing a final report, with recommendations. This is that report.

The Committee held a number of additional public and private hearings, and a two-day roundtable with key groups, before finalising its report.

MEDIA CONFERENCE & CONTACT DETAILS

A media conference will be held in Committee Room 2R1 at Parliament House from 1.15pm.

Copies of the report are available from the Committee Secretariat, or online at the Committee website: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca/

For media comment from the Chair after the media conference, please contact:

Mrs Kay Hull, MP (Chair), via tel: (02) 6921 4600 (electorate) or (02) 6277 4723 (P House)

For further details on the inquiry, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4566 or visit the inquiry website

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP FOR THIS INQUIRY

Chairman Mrs Kay Hull MP

Members Hon Alan Cadman MP
 Ms Trish Draper MP
 Mr Peter Dutton MP
 Ms Jennie George MP
 Mrs Julia Irwin MP

Mr Chris Pearce MP
Hon Graham Edwards MP
Mr Harry Quick MP
Mr Cameron Thompson MP
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