

SECTION 8: DRUGS AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Role of communities

8.1 It be acknowledged that:

- (a) some communities and families feel overwhelmed and hopeless and are looking for leadership and positive ideas - a shared game plan - for how to deal with illicit drugs,
- (b) the community as a whole needs to better understand, discuss and take ownership of the issue and the solutions, and be empowered to address its causes and impacts,
- (c) communities need to show compassion toward people who engage in harmful drug use,
- (d) communities need to recognise drug users as part of the community,
- (e) community action can take various forms depending on the particular needs of different communities, both cultural and locational, and
- (f) on-going leadership and the collaboration of community interests is required to sustain effective community action.

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government's response to the Drug Summit and its communiqué has been framed with these principles in mind. In particular, the **Drugs and Community Action Strategy** as well as a **Community Drug Information Strategy** will incorporate the principles espoused in this recommendation.

The Government's response acknowledges the value of demonstrating compassion for users and their families, but does not tolerate any normalisation of heroin use. While the stigma surrounding seeking help for drug problems should be removed, the stigma regarding drug use and experimentation should remain. The Government's response is founded on the principle of responsibility - personal, community and governmental.

The Special Minister of State will have responsibility for coordinating a whole of government response to the drug problem, including community action and information.

Community education and information campaign

8.2 There be a concerted campaign, based on best practice models to inform the community, especially local governments, parents, young and older people, and community organisations, about illicit drugs. This should:

- (a) provide information on:
 - the patterns and impacts of harmful drug use

- the factors that can cause illicit drug use and addiction
 - the links between licit and illicit drug use
 - policies and programs relating to illicit drugs
 - initiatives that can reduce drug-related harms
 - sources of support and information
 - the role of parents, family members, elders, peers and others in inhibiting harmful drug use
 - evidence of successful strategies
 - what communities can do
- (b) target at risk young people and inform the broader community (especially local governments, parents, young and older people, and community organisations) about the dangers of and strategies for dealing with illicit drugs. It should promote the messages that:
- drug misuse is not desirable
 - drug misuse is harmful
 - drug misuse is endemic
 - drug misusers are part of the community and are themselves victims of criminal activity
 - drug misusers require compassion, resources and maximum opportunities to enable them to stop using drugs
 - there should be a commitment to a range of strategies to reduce the harm of drug misuse to the community and individuals, including:
 - law enforcement
 - prevention of initiation to drug misuse
 - providing drug treatment from maintenance to abstinence
 - strategies designed to reduce specific harms related to drug misuse
- (c) utilise a variety of media including advertising, direct mail (such as brochures inserted in council rate notices and utility bills), an on-line drugs information clearinghouse (along the lines of the Drug Summit web site), and tool kits as an aid to community action,
- (d) involve a “champion” or “champions”, including high profile positive role models from a range of backgrounds, especially sport and the entertainment industry,
- (e) be conducted as a partnership between the government, community interests (such as sporting bodies), and business interests (such as those in the health, insurance and advertising sectors), and
- (f) maximise the input and involvement of young people in the design of peer education advertising.

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will establish a three year **Community Drug Information Strategy** to implement this recommendation. Governments can't solve the drug problem alone. All sectors have a role to play in building community awareness about drug use and enabling communities to address the culture of drug use. The key elements of the Community Drug Information Strategy will be improved coordination of government agency communication efforts and partnerships with corporate and community interests.

The Strategy will be informed by international best practice in drug education and draw on drug education experience in other States, and nationally. It will build on the work of bodies such as the Health Information Service, the Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol (CEIDA), the Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre, the Health Education Unit at Sydney University, the Department of Education and Training and the NSW Police's Drug Programs Coordination Unit. It will also link to initiatives such as the Australian Drug Information Network in which the State Library is a partner.

The Community Drug Information Strategy will take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of New South Wales and the varying information requirements of different communities, particularly those of rural and remote communities and of people from Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds.

Specific community education and information initiatives contained elsewhere in the Government's response include:

- enhanced telephone information services to support families (3.12)
- enhanced training programs for volunteers, families and carers of drug users (5.15-5.16)
- a Family Drug Information Kit (10.8)
- Community Drug Action Kits (8.3)
- a telephone information service for adolescents (2.16).

Training and information resources will be provided to help health and community organisations work more effectively with the media to convey accurate drug information.

The Government will be looking to boost resources with corporate sponsorships and partnerships. Government agencies, including schools, will work closely with local councils and community groups such as churches, charities, sporting bodies, service clubs and community organisations to implement community education and information initiatives at the local level.

A **Community Drug Information Taskforce** will be set up to assist the development of this strategy. This Taskforce will comprise drug education experts, communications experts, local government representatives, and representatives of key Government agencies and will have input from corporate and community representatives.

Increasing the level of community leadership, cooperation and coordination

8.3 The importance of community leadership, cooperation and coordination be recognised, and that community leaders and community leadership, cooperation and coordination organisations at all levels and in all sectors be encouraged to:

- (a) Provide direction and opportunities for communities to determine how they can take constructive action in relation to the supply, distribution and abuse of drugs. This might involve the development of local community drug action strategies – shared game plans – to deal with the causes and incidence of illicit drug use and to reduce its harms.**
- (b) Cooperate across government and community agencies, service providers, businesses and others in a partnership approach at local, regional, state and national levels.**

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government's **Drugs and Community Action Strategy** will comprise:

- the establishment of Community Drug Action Teams in various localities across New South Wales which will be supported by a team of regionally based project officers
- an information and training program for local councils and other organisations on drug issues
- guidelines on how communities can work together to deal with local drug issues in the form of a Community Drug Action Tool Kit
- a Drugs and Community Action homepage to provide an on-line information clearinghouse on what governments and communities are doing to tackle drug misuse.

Community Drug Action Teams

8.4 Support be given to the proposal in the Premier's 7 Point Plan for additional Community Drug Action Teams. These should:

- (a) operate in all regions of NSW, under the auspices of the Regional Coordination Management Groups of the Premier's Department's Regional Coordination Program,**
- (b) operate also at local levels where and when appropriate,**
- (c) bring together key agencies with key stakeholder representatives,**
- (d) facilitate community awareness campaigns in their areas,**
- (e) facilitate community involvement in setting priorities and in developing initiatives through local community drug action strategies,**

- (f) **link with other whole of government coordination initiatives such as place management projects which utilize outside, skilled facilitators, and**
- (g) **link whenever possible with other social development (such as *Families First, Schools as Community Centres* and volunteer programs), crime prevention and economic development initiatives.**

See also recommendations 1.10, 11.4 and 11.10.

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will support **Community Drug Action Teams** where local communities are keen to actively participate in the fight against drugs and where there is leadership and a willingness to build partnerships between the council, community groups and business and the State Government. These will be established progressively over the next four years. Priority will be given to those areas most adversely affected by drug misuse, and where good links can be made with other community development and crime prevention initiatives.

Community Drug Action Teams will be encouraged to involve local government representatives, staff of key Government agencies such as Police Local Area Commanders, school principals and staff, Area Health Service staff, magistrates and non-government service providers, as well as representatives of youth and community organisations, Student Representative Councils, volunteer groups, service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, employment groups, churches and the like. They should also liaise closely with local Members of Parliament.

Local school and community forums will be held where appropriate, to bring together this broad range of interests in the community to exchange information, build links and provide input into **Local Drug Action Plans**. The Community Drug Action Teams will also be expected to build on the work and networks of local Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committees, Schools as Community Centres and other initiatives.

The existing Drug Action Teams at Redfern and Fairfield, and the Harm Minimisation Committee at Kings Cross, will be brought under the umbrella of this program. It is expected that by June 2000 a number of additional Community Drug Action Teams will be in operation.

The Government will also explore the desirability of establishing **non-location specific Community Drug Action Teams** for particular sections of the community such as those from Aboriginal or non-English speaking backgrounds.

In addition, the existing Regional Coordination Management Groups that operate under the Premier's Department's Regional Coordination Program will ensure a collaborative and coordinated approach to supporting Community Drug Action Teams and implementing the Government's drug strategy at regional and local levels. These

Groups include senior regional managers of the Premier's Department, Area Health Service, NSW Police, and the Departments of Education and Training, Corrective Services, Community Services and Juvenile Justice.

Facilitation and seed funding for local initiatives will be through the Drugs and Community Action Strategy referred to in the response to recommendation 8.3. The Government will ask the Commonwealth to contribute funding for the Community Drug Action Teams and local school and community forums through the National Illicit Drug Strategy Community Partnerships Initiative and its 'Tough on Drugs in Schools' program.

Community support and action

8.5 The importance of community support for a wide range of responses to the causes, incidence and harms of illicit drug use be recognised, and that communities be encouraged to make concerted efforts to raise awareness and take constructive action.

See also recommendation 11.8

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

This principle will be recognised in the **Drugs and Community Action Strategy** and the **Community Drug Information Strategy**, which will guide and assist communities and local councils.

Multi faceted, collaborative and integrative health and welfare approaches at local and regional levels

8.6 The need for a multi-faceted, collaborative and integrated approach to the causes, incidence and impacts of illicit drugs be endorsed. This should involve:

- (a) **Each region or area providing a core or basic level of Drug and Alcohol services. Such programs can be provided through the public health system, community and welfare agencies, and government and non-government agencies. They should be consistent with best practice standards, be properly supervised and include:**
- **assessment, counselling and referral,**
 - **case management,**
 - **detoxification - residential and non-residential ,**
 - **residential rehabilitation programs (therapeutic communities),**
 - **methadone and opioid substitution programs (LAAM, buprenorphine),**

- **early and brief intervention,**
 - **training and education,**
 - **prevention and community development programs, and**
 - **programs to address special needs groups like Aboriginal people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, women and youth, for example specific detoxification for Aboriginal or Indo-Chinese youth.**
- (b) **More access points at a local level to maximise paths to advice and other services.**
- (c) **Central contact points to broker placement in rehabilitation facilities.**
- (d) **Additional treatment and post-detoxification places, especially for adolescents.**
- (e) **Greater use of peers as a positive means of reducing harmful behaviours.**

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation and recognises the importance of integrated drug treatment services being available in all areas (see Section 3).

The Government will develop a **Drug Treatment Services Plan** with the long term goal of ensuring that all regions have a service system that is comprehensive, innovative and evidence based. The Plan will map existing services and, based on identified need, outline future goals for service delivery.

In the interim the Government is continuing to expand services in areas of need, particularly in rural and regional areas and Western Sydney. Additional priority areas have been identified in the **Fighting Drugs Policy** released in March 1999. These additional and priority services are outlined in detail in Section 3. They include detoxification, rehabilitation, adolescent outpatient and outreach, counselling, funding for non-government organisations, methadone services, prevention and early intervention services.

The Government is also trialling some innovative models for brokering services for people with drug and related problems (see 2.1 and 6.8 and Section 4).

Sections 2 and 10 outline a number of initiatives to **expand preventative strategies and treatment services for young people**, including through peer and mentoring programs and programs to address specific groups such as Aboriginal young people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Community Drug Action Plans

8.7 Local Community Drug Action Plans be developed with local agencies, non-government agencies, volunteers, residents and community organisations, using the combined resources of Local and State Government. These should be submitted to full public and community consultation and negotiation processes (such as those used in urban

planning law). These negotiated plans may include all lawful options as part of a comprehensive strategy for local law enforcement, health, community and preventative education initiatives. The Government should consider any legislative amendments needed to facilitate such plans.

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

All Community Drug Action Teams sponsored by the State Government will be encouraged to develop **Local Drug Action Plans** in accordance with the requirements outlined in the above recommendation. Plans will identify priority issues and actions that can be undertaken at a local level by all relevant government and non-government agencies. Plans will be considered by each agency and by the Regional Coordination Management Groups, as well as being monitored by the Government's Cabinet Committee on Drugs.

The Drugs and Community Action Strategy outlined in response to recommendation 8.3 will provide guidance and templates for developing and implementing Local Drug Action Plans.

Strengthening communities, particularly disadvantaged communities

8.8 The need to strengthen communities, and to renew disadvantaged communities in particular, be recognised. Community development initiatives along the following lines should be supported:

- (a) local positive role models from all sectors of that community,**
- (b) projects which maximise job creation and vocational training and employment opportunities for young people, especially in areas of high youth unemployment,**
- (c) programs which support families, especially those with young children and children and young people at risk (such as *Families First* and *Schools as Community Centres*),**
- (d) initiatives to enhance local environments and facilities, and**
- (e) local community-based initiatives (such as events) that can be sustained over time.**

See also recommendations 1.1-1.3, 1.7, 2.7-2.9, 11.3-11.4

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

These concepts will be incorporated in the Drugs and Community Action Strategy and links established between the new Strengthening Communities Unit in the Premiers Department and the Government's Senior Officers Coordinating Committee on Drugs.

Government action to tackle the causes associated with drug misuse is also being implemented through a range of programs such as:

- *Families First*
- *Schools as Community Centres*
- the *Area Assistance Scheme*
- the *Neighbourhood Improvement Program*
- the *Urban Improvement Program*
- the *Youth Partnerships Initiative*
- the *Community Partnerships* program
- the youth traineeship and transition to work initiatives
- the *Community Safety* initiative
- the *Safer Towns and Cities Program*

The Government will ensure links are made between its drug and alcohol initiatives and its many other community development and crime prevention initiatives through the Cabinet Committee on Drugs, the Senior Officers Coordinating Committee on Drugs, the Regional Coordination Management Groups and Community Drug Action Teams.

Community resources

8.9 The Government and other institutions invest additional resources to help communities take action to address local problems. This should include:

- (a) mobilising resources from a range of sources including casinos, registered and sporting clubs, the corporate sector and community organisations,**
- (b) providing additional resources to frontline drug and related services, especially those for children, adolescents and families, and**
- (c) taking into account preventable costs in identifying priorities for resource allocation.**

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will seek to mobilise additional resources through the Community Drug Information Strategy, and will encourage communities to mobilise local resources through Community Drug Action Teams.

The Trustees of the Casino Community Benefits Fund will be encouraged to make funds available for innovative partnerships between agencies and community groups to provide information and services to individuals, families and communities.

The constructive efforts of voluntary and community groups to tackle drug misuse will be recognised and rewarded by the Government through a special category in the revamped *Premier's Awards for excellence in Voluntary and Community Effort*.

Community Drug Action Teams and groups involved in constructive action will also receive due recognition through a certificate under the Community Drug Information Strategy.

Resource allocation to be evidence and outcome based

8.10 Wherever possible, there should be evidence-based criteria for policies and the allocation of resources, as well as outcome-based reports on initiatives in order to benchmark performance.

Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Evidence based and outcome based evaluation mechanisms will be identified for the key elements of the Government's response, including the Drugs and Community Action Strategy and the Community Drugs Information Strategy.

