

## SECTION 2: YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUG ABUSE

### A holistic response to drug use

- 2.1 **It should be recognised that the reasons that young people use drugs are complex and varied, including the alienation of some young people from society and their belief that society does not value them. An effective response to illicit drug use by young people has to be a holistic approach as complex and varied as the needs it addresses. It must seek to prevent, minimise and manage harm caused by drug use and must be provided to and involve young people in the context of their family, peer group, school and community, and not in isolation from these factors.**

### Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Premier has asked the Ministers responsible for delivering human services to develop, by the end of 1999, a cross-government **strategic approach for meeting the needs of vulnerable young people**.

The aim of the approach will be to ensure that no matter where a vulnerable young person makes contact with an agency (through school, police, justice system, community services, housing or health), they can be directed to the most appropriate services available.

It is envisaged that the strategy might include:

- a common approach by departments to assessing the needs of vulnerable young people
- development of consistent or comparable data collection and evaluation methods
- inter-agency guidelines for working with vulnerable young people and their families, (these might be developed in a similar way to the child protection guidelines)
- greater use of technology across departments to ensure that services are responsive and coordinated
- development of trial models for assisting young people at high risk from drugs who are not likely to access more conventional support services such as those provided by schools or counsellors (see also 1.3, 6.5 and 6.11) regarding proposals that the Departments of Community Services and Juvenile Justice pilot new approaches to integrated services for vulnerable young people with high support needs where illicit drugs are just one part of their wider isolation and alienation from society)

- development of youth specific prevention, treatment and other services for illicit drug use.

The approach will be developed by the human services Ministers (Health, Community Services, Education and Training, Housing, Juvenile Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth) in consultation with the Ministers for Sport and Recreation, Police, the Attorney General and the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and will refer to the recommendations of the Drug Summit concerning young people and drug abuse.

Once the strategy has been endorsed by the Government, all agencies which provide services to vulnerable young people will be required to review their policies and programs to ensure consistency with the approach.

### **Involvement of young people in planning and delivery of services**

#### **2.2 Funding agreements for drug programs and activities should include young people in decision making about planning and delivery of the services and activities, and demonstrate a capacity to address the needs of children and young people on a local basis.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Premier will ask the Ministers for Health, Police, Community Services, Housing, Education and Training, Juvenile Justice, Corrective Services, Gaming and Racing and Sport and Recreation to include:

- a clause requiring participation by young people in decision making about planning and delivery of services and activities in all funding agreements and contracts with agencies providing drug related services to young people
- a clause requiring an assessment of the capacity of the organisation to address the needs of children and young people on a local basis in selection criteria for all grants, subsidies and tenders for projects to provide drug related services to young people

The Government will pilot a 'Y-Care' **Youth Health Partnership Project** in Northern and South Eastern Sydney to develop two area wide networks. These youth friendly health services will be developed with service patterns decided by youth and will include general practitioners, psychologists and sports medicine workers. The aim of the networks is to encourage young people to identify their social, cultural, health or economic needs, and to be involved in the planning and provision of their local health services.

## **Retention of problematic students in education**

- 2.3 The Department of Education and Training, Catholic and Independent schools and other related agencies should enhance strategies to retain problematic students in the educational process, increase access to alternative education settings and ensure the ongoing education of young offenders following their involvement in the Juvenile Justice system.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation and **will work with the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Commission** to develop strategies to retain problematic students in education.

The Government is putting in place or improving, through the Department of Education and Training, a number of important programs to assist young people.

- All students suspended from Government schools for drug related reasons will be helped to confront their drug use and change their behaviour so they are able to return to school (see 10.5 for details).
- In 1999, two additional **alternative education programs** for students with special needs will be established at Maitland and Port Macquarie. These alternative education programs are conducted in settings away from school sites and are designed to re-engage young people with behavioural problems in continuing education and training.
- During 1999, young people leaving Juvenile Justice centres will be surveyed to see whether they will continue with education and training. The survey will allow the Department of Education and Training to ensure these young people retain involvement in community based education and training options. It will also allow the schools in juvenile justice centres to monitor their transition programs and the planning of appropriate post release education and training for young people.
- A **TAFE *Young People at Risk* program** will be introduced to operate in locations where there are high concentrations of youth at risk, giving them individual support, vocational planning and TAFE training. Later the students will undertake TAFE classes in either vocational skills, the School Certificate or the Higher School Certificate. They may choose to return to school, but will still be supported by the program for any particular weaknesses such as literacy or numeracy.
- Classroom teachers in Government schools will be assisted to develop more effective strategies for working with disengaged and alienated young people (see 10.4).

## Culturally specific services for young offenders and their families

- 2.4 In order to provide more appropriate services to over-represented cultural groups in the Juvenile Justice system, there must be greater community consultation and involvement in the training of police, judicial, juvenile justice and correctional staff and in the provision of culturally appropriate programs and ongoing support systems for young offenders and their families.**

### Government response

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Department of Juvenile Justice will:

- improve the cultural effectiveness of its programs for groups which are over-represented in the general juvenile offender population by developing guidelines for dealing with these young people in collaboration with key cultural agencies, including the Ethnic Affairs Commission
- provide funds to research the cultural effectiveness of its rehabilitation programs for Aboriginal young people, in partnership with agencies such as the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council.

In 1999/2000, the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council and the Attorney General's Department will develop a partnership to focus on **crime prevention planning for Aboriginal communities**, including young people. Projects already identified include:

- development of Aboriginal community consultation guidelines for inclusion as an annexure to the Department's Crime Prevention Resource Manual
- development of a Crime Prevention Resource Manual specifically targeted at Indigenous communities.

The Government has recently expanded community representation on the Judicial Commission to help promote judicial awareness of a range of community views and cultural values.

The Government will continue a range of projects focusing on young people aimed at preventing and reducing crime in Indigenous communities in New South Wales, such as the South Sydney Youth Service *Koori Justice Program*, the Ballina and Moree *Streetbeat* projects, four pilot *Aboriginal Night Patrols*, and the Streetwise *It's Legit* comic.

### Youth Drug Court

- 2.5 There should be established a pilot program for a Children's Drug Court as part of the Children's Court system, to be adequately resourced for the treatment and rehabilitation of young people with alcohol and other drug problems.**

## **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation (see also 6.11 and 9.17).

The Government plans to **implement a Youth Drug Court** on a two year pilot basis from July 2000 (see also 6.11).

The Youth Drug Court pilot will apply the adult Drug Court approach in a modified fashion tailored to youth drug use and youth offending issues. Unlike the adult Court, it will target alcohol as well as illicit drugs and be directed at problematic drug and alcohol behaviour as much as dependency.

The Government proposes that the model for the Youth Drug Court will combine intensive judicial supervision and case management of young offenders who are charged with criminal offences that result from drug misuse. These young people will be referred into programs aimed at eliminating or reducing their drug misuse and related criminal behaviour and increasing their ability to function as law abiding members of the community.

The Youth Drug Court will include enhanced and new treatment services tailored especially to the needs of young people, and will include culturally effective services. Research suggests that children will need more intensive general lifestyle interventions through education, employment, housing and peer/parent relationship services.

As with the adult Drug Court program, the Youth Drug Court will be carefully evaluated.

Following a needs analysis, the Government will provide funds to expand the **Department of Juvenile Justice's Intensive Programs Units** to provide alcohol and drug treatment for young people referred to these programs through the Drug Court, whether on suspended sentences, remand or other. Funds will also be provided for those young people requiring accommodation to support these interventions.

See also 2.14 and Section 6 concerning the Young Offenders Act scheme.

## **Additional treatment and rehabilitation services for young people**

- 2.6 There should be resources to provide additional alcohol and other drug detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation services for young people, both community based and residential. These services must also be available to incarcerated drug offenders and continue after they leave the detention centre. They should be appropriately linked to mental health services.**

## **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will develop a five year **Drug Treatment Services Plan** (see 3.1-3.5 for further information) with the long term goal of building a service system that is comprehensive, innovative and evidence based. Treatment **services for young people will be addressed as a priority** within this Plan. The aim is to improve services for young people with drug problems and lessen the likelihood of their drug use becoming entrenched.

A number of areas which require immediate attention have also been identified.

- The **Western Sydney Youth Treatment Service** will provide an 8-12 bed residential rehabilitation facility for youth. It is anticipated that operation will commence later this year in Cumberland Hospital (see 3.1).
- The **expansion of Home Detoxification Services** to be established under the Fighting Drugs Policy (\$16.4 million to expand treatment services) will have particular relevance to young people (see 3.1).
- NSW Health will give priority to **cannabis treatment programs** for young people bearing in mind recent surveys indicating an increasing use of cannabis by young people. The Government will also promote further research and treatment trials for young people dependent on cannabis over the next four years, and provide training and education programs on cannabis use to workers who come in contact with young people with an emerging cannabis problem (see 3.5).
- NSW is also participating with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories on the development of cannabis treatment programs (see 3.5).

These State services will be complemented by the recent treatment enhancements provided by the Commonwealth under the **National Illicit Drug Strategy** under which NSW received funding to provide:

- a comprehensive, non-residential youth service in the Wentworth area
- the development of a specialist residential service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents in Western NSW.

The Government will also provide:

- additional **residential rehabilitation** programs at Dubbo and the mid North Coast which will provide access to rehabilitation to young people especially young offenders and Aboriginal youth
- additional **counselling and group work** for drug using young offenders in regional New South Wales (see 2.14).

Section 6 outlines a proposal for extending the Young Offenders Act to include minor drug offences so young people with drug problems can benefit from formal police cautioning and youth justice conferencing under the Act. Subject to Commonwealth funding, enhanced treatment services under this proposal will include the appointment of additional youth/family workers in three Western Sydney Area Health Services.

Section 7 outlines the implementation of the recommendations of the **Detection and Management of Illicit Drugs Report**, commissioned by the Department of Juvenile Justice, to improve the rehabilitation of young offenders with serious drug and alcohol

problems. One important outcome will be the provision of detoxification services for young offenders in juvenile justice centres with the construction of detoxification facilities in metropolitan juvenile justice remand centres.

The Government will establish a **grants scheme to support youth drug and alcohol prevention activities**, including activities responsive to the needs of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The scheme will operate in each Area Health Service and will be implemented progressively from 2000. One-off seeding grants will be provided to agencies working with young people to support innovative and/or demonstration projects that could be adapted by other agencies to prevent drug related harm. Evaluation and project reporting will be an essential criteria for these projects.

### **Mentors and peer support**

**2.7 Mentoring should be recognised as an important support for young people. Best practice guidelines should be established for peer support programs to strengthen the effectiveness of support for students at significant transition points within their school career.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation and a number of initiatives are planned (see also 10.5).

- New guidelines will be developed to formalise procedures for teachers to mentor and support young people at times of significant transition when they are especially vulnerable, such as when moving from Year 6 to Year 7.
- A **new mentoring project for students at risk** in the transition from primary to high school will be developed.
- A **YWCA Big Sister/Big Brother mentoring project** will be piloted for young offenders who receive a caution or are referred for a Youth Justice Conference under the *Young Offenders Act 1997*. This will be a three year project for young offenders at Parramatta and Coffs Harbour. The project aims to provide positive adult guidance, support and friendship to young people, particularly where there is an absence of such relationships in their lives.
- A number of **peer drug education models will be piloted and evaluated** during 1999 and 2000. The findings of the evaluation will be made available to teachers to assist them incorporate appropriate peer drug education programs into school drug education programs.
- Given that many young people turn to friends as their main source of information about drugs, peer education initiatives will be developed during 1999. These will include a helpline, pamphlets and community messages, including targeted youth media, to inform young people about how to help a friend at risk and what to do in

an emergency. It will also show older students the importance of being positive role models.

- The Department of Juvenile Justice will conduct a needs analysis and make recommendations to improve **culturally specific mentoring for young offenders** which will assist in school retention rates. This is linked to the provision of culturally appropriate services as outlined in 2.4.

Given the range of mentoring programs currently operating or proposed, the Government will **evaluate Australian and overseas mentoring programs** by July 2000. This will enable best practice in the Australian context to inform future development of suitable mentoring programs.

The evaluation project will involve the administrations of Education and Training, Juvenile Justice, Community Services and Aboriginal Affairs, the Attorney General, the Ethnic Affairs Commission, The Cabinet Office and the Premier's Department. The Commission for Children and Young People will be consulted.

Following this evaluation, the mentoring programs run by the Department of Juvenile Justice and those funded by the Department of Community Services will be expanded from 2001, if considered necessary.

### **Provision of responsive activities and public space**

#### **2.8 Government at all levels and communities should provide young people with activities, entertainment and public space which fits their culture, is responsive to their needs and may be structured or unstructured.**

#### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation but notes that local government, business and the general community all have a part to play in providing young people with activities, entertainment and public space which are responsive to their needs.

The need to improve the access of young people to public space and facilities is one of the four themes of the Government's **Youth Policy**, *Focus on Young People*, released in October 1998.

The Government's **Youth Partnerships Initiative** will focus in 1999/2000 on preparing young people for work, providing them with a safe environment in which to live, and access to community space and facilities. The initiative works with young people in their local communities. It is designed to tap into their aspirations and creative ideas, and involve them in addressing their problems and issues. It will facilitate collaboration between State and Commonwealth Government agencies, local government, business, philanthropic groups and community organisations in addressing youth issues.

The Government's new *Planning with Youth in Mind* guidebook, to be launched shortly, is aimed at making young people welcome in places such as shopping centres and transport interchanges and minimising the potential for conflict.

**A Youth Entertainment Program will be established** to encourage the provision of safe, drug and alcohol-free entertainment for under 18 year-olds in regional and rural New South Wales. Subsidies will be available for groups to run regular dance parties, concerts or band competitions and to help with costs such as transport for young people to attend these events. The program will commence in July 2000.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has initiated an "**Equal Space**" project, to bring together young people, retailers, management and security staff in the Stockland Mall at Wetherill Park. The project will work on creative solutions for young people congregating in the Stockland shopping precinct. It will promote and develop rapport between groups using the Mall, develop and establish a technology centre including computer links in Wetherill Park Library and run activities for young people. It will help young people from culturally diverse backgrounds living in the Fairfield local government area. This project is supported by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Parks Community Network (the auspice), Fairfield City Council and Stockland Mall.

A Canterbury-Bankstown Working Party will pursue the establishment of multipurpose facilities for young people in Bankstown under the Ethnic Affairs Commission, **Community Partnership Scheme**. The Working Party has developed an Action Plan to deal with the key issues of: improving Police/community relations, literacy and numeracy skills, parent/family support and sporting and cultural facilities as well as promoting positive images of young people in the area.

All local councils were required to develop by June 1999 **social community plans** to help ensure their services and programs are responsive to the needs of all people, but particularly children and young people, living and working in their local government area. From July 1999 councils will also have to detail their access and equity activities and achievements in their management plans and annual reports.

The Premier will write to the Local Government and Shires Association to remind them of this recommendation from the Drug Summit.

### **Access to training and skills development**

**2.9 Government at all levels, in partnership with employers, should ensure that young people have access to jobs by providing appropriate and relevant skills and training and job creation opportunities.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will create opportunities for young people to improve their employability as laid out in **the Ready For Work Plan** released in March 1999. This will be implemented over the next four years. The Plan will see:

- more apprentices employed, with payroll tax concessions for employers
- 2000 trainees gaining jobs in government departments and agencies
- students completing industry-accredited vocational education courses as part of their Higher School Certificate
- students making a smooth transition to work with the benefit of a tailored School-to-Work plan (individual plans to be developed for all government school students in Years 9-12 commencing in areas of greatest need over the next two years)
- students having structured, meaningful work experience as part of their secondary schooling
- more students being taken on as trainees by employers while still at school
- more students learning at campuses offering both school and TAFE programs
- new vocational programs to help young people at risk, in locations where there are high concentrations of youth at risk, giving them individual support, vocational planning and TAFE training, including a further 100 TAFE training places over the next four years at schools in Juvenile Justice Centres
- students able to gain a TAFE scholarship to continue their studies.

The Minister for Education and Training will implement a new framework for vocational education and training, including new curriculum, regional skills centres, new HSC courses and an expansion of part-time traineeships for year 11 and 12 students. The Premier has asked the Minister to closely monitor the implementation of this new system to ensure it is achieving its objectives which should provide greater choice, better options and greater relevance in preparing for working life.

The Government will provide additional life skills and accredited market place employment skills training for clients of the Department of Juvenile Justice, under community supervision and in custody in detention centres thus enhancing the future chances of employment of these young people.

The Premier will write to the Prime Minister stressing the Commonwealth's primary responsibility for employment matters and labour market programs. The Premier will urge the Prime Minister to expand the Commonwealth's efforts in job creation opportunities for young people as a diversion from drugs, as well as other economic and personal benefits.

## **Professional development for teachers and counsellors**

### **2.10 Schools should provide professional development for school counsellors and teachers to:**

- (a) identify the signs of drug abuse,**
- (b) refer young people to appropriate services, and**
- (c) develop supportive/therapeutic protocols to help school communities find better ways of addressing drug use in the school environment.**

## **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation (see Sections 5 and 10).

The Government will continue to provide all school and TAFE counsellors with **specialised drug and alcohol training** to assist young people with drug problems.

The Government will use funds from the Commonwealth National School Drug Education Strategy to provide **professional development** for teachers, particularly in primary schools, to ensure effective implementation of a whole school approach to drug issues.

A number of NSW Government initiatives which will assist the professional development of teachers and school counsellors are outlined in sections 5 and 10. These include:

- enhanced professional development in drug education for practising teachers
- assistance to classroom teachers with strategies for working with disengaged and alienated young people
- seeking information from the Deans of Teacher Education on the current extent of training about drug education in pre-service programs
- raising the issue of pre-service training in drug education for teachers with the Non-Government Schools Advisory Council.

## **A continuum of services for young people**

### **2.11 There is a need for a continuum of government and non-government services for drug abuse including prevention, early intervention, detoxification, rehabilitation and follow up. These services should:**

- (a) be accessible and timely,**
- (b) recognise the importance of assisting drug users and also their families,**
- (c) be youth acceptable, and**
- (d) look at the whole person's needs not just their drug addiction, including mental health, employment and accommodation.**

## **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The development and adoption by agencies of a cross-government strategic approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people, as outlined in the Government's response to recommendation 2.1, and the consequent review of policies and programs to ensure consistency with the framework, will assist with adopting a holistic approach to services.

NSW Health supports a continuum model of service delivery for young people and will implement a number of projects:

- a one-stop-shop for young people in rural and remote areas (see 2.14)
- the Youth Friendly Community Health Centre project (see 2.14)
- a cannabis early intervention and treatment program (see 3.5)
- continuing education for young people on polydrug use
- development and implementation of the Youth Alcohol Action Plan.

The Department of Juvenile Justice will contribute to a continuum of services for young people by providing:

- training for community based and custodial staff to promote greater awareness of alcohol and drug issues relating to their clients (see 1.9, 7.6)
- additional resources to establish detoxification facilities for those adolescents who are high level users of drugs and at risk, and who enter detention facilities with detoxification needs
- facilities with multidisciplinary teams of professional staff
- additional community based services to support drug court and community based orders.

See also recommendations in:

- Sections 1 and 3 which are concerned with early intervention, prevention and a commitment to expansion of services
- Section 4 regarding a new approach to integrated service delivery for vulnerable young people with high support needs, where illicit drugs is just one part of their wider isolation and alienation from society
- Sections 8 and 10 concerned with approaches to education involving the whole community in dealing with drug issues.

## **Youth acceptable and accessible services**

### **2.12 All youth services need to be youth accessible and youth acceptable.**

#### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation (see also 2.1 and 2.2).

The Government is aware of the need for services for young people to be organised, managed, accommodated and sometimes staffed in ways which are different to services for adults. The **Government's Youth Policy**, *Focus on Young People* (October 1998), sets down principles for providing services to young people. The Policy requires Government agencies to ensure that services are relevant, timely and

appropriate to young people's needs. The policy has been widely circulated within Government.

Other initiatives with a youth focus include:

- the **NSW Youth Health Policy**, *Young People's Health: Our Future*
- fourteen **youth health services** in New South Wales
- the recent establishment of the **NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health**
- the new *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* which with the Youth Health Policy will assist in making health, child protection and substitute care services more accessible, and responsive to the particular needs of young people.

A **Youth Customer Group** will be established shortly. The Group will comprise five young people and come under the auspices of the NSW Youth Advisory Council. It will advise Government agencies on how to improve services to young people. The Department of Housing will be one of the first agencies to work with the Customer Group to improve the quality and relevance of their services to people under 25. The Department of Housing has been chosen because of its regular contact with young people.

NSW Health, in partnership with the NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health, will implement the **Youth Friendly Community Health Centres project**. This project will assess and transform 21 Community Health Centres in New South Wales into youth-friendly and youth-sensitive services. Drug and alcohol services will be linked to this project.

### **Review of services**

**2.13 A comprehensive needs analysis and review of services across all government and non-government service providers should be completed. This should also be used to compile a database so that young people and parents can access information and support services.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will commission a project to compile a **data base** identifying all services used by young people in New South Wales with drug addiction or other related problems such as homelessness and mental health, including services for young people from Aboriginal and diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The project will commence late in 1999 and will be managed by The Cabinet Office.

It is proposed initially to test an approach by using two geographic areas and one discrete community group as a trial for collecting data. The areas for analysis will be identified by September 1999 and the trial will be completed within twelve months.

The study will encompass State, Commonwealth and local government services, those provided by non-government organisations, churches and service clubs and the private sector.

Following completion of the trial, the approach will be evaluated and, depending on feasibility, further developed to cover the whole State.

**Information about support services** will be made available through the adolescent specific website and youth accessible telephone line (see 2.16 and 2.17).

As well as being important in providing information about what services are available, the project will inform future decision making about drug and related programs for young people. It will be complementary to the strategic framework to be developed under recommendation 2.1 and the development of the *Drug Treatment Services Plan* (see 3.1).

### **Innovative approaches to regional and rural services for young people**

#### **2.14 Innovative ways of delivering services to young people in regional and rural NSW be developed (for example, telelink, mobile services) to ensure the provision of appropriate and accessible services.**

##### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation and will provide a range of new or improved services for young people in regional and rural areas.

- **Grants to support youth drug and alcohol prevention activities** in each regional Area Health Service will be provided from 2000. One-off seeding grants will be available to agencies working with young people in rural areas to support innovative and/or demonstration projects to prevent drug related harm that could be adapted by other agencies. Evaluation and project reporting will be an essential criteria for these projects.
- **Ten Community Health Centres in rural areas will be targeted** to make their services more accessible and appropriate for young people, as part of the Youth Friendly Community Health Centres project. The project will assess and transform Community Health Centres in New South Wales into youth-friendly and youth-sensitive services. Drug and alcohol services will be linked to this project.
- A **one-stop-shop service delivery model for rural areas** will be developed. NSW Health and the Department of Community Services will develop and evaluate a pilot project aimed at providing drug and alcohol services within an environment accessible to young people (such as an existing youth centre). One-stop-shops could provide youth friendly spaces, access to information, recreation activities, and access to Government services such as counselling and referral on set days.

- **Two additional residential based drug rehabilitation programs** will be established at Dubbo and on the Mid-North Coast to provide suitable rehabilitation programs for young people in regional New South Wales. These programs will include a focus on Aboriginal young people and young offenders.
- Additional **counselling and group programs for drug using young offenders** will be provided as part of the Department of Juvenile Justice's Rural Based Intensive Programs Unit scheme, in various regional locations such as, Lismore, Gosford, Bateman's Bay and Dubbo. This scheme will also become part of the Youth Drug Court service infrastructure.
- The current **evaluation of the telehealth initiative** will provide information on how the programs should be extended or modified to better meet the needs of young people. The telehealth initiative which provides rural areas with access to specialist consultation on a range of health issues has spent close to half the total funds on expanding telepsychiatry counselling and support to children and young people.
- In 1999, two additional **alternative education programs** for students with special needs will be established at Maitland and Port Macquarie. These alternative education programs are conducted in settings away from school sites and are designed to re-engage young people with behavioural problems in continuing education and training.

The data collection project in 2.13 and the *Drug Treatment Services Plan* (see 3.1) will also be important in identifying existing services in rural and regional areas that could be models for expansion into other areas.

The Premier has asked the Ministers for Information Technology and Regional Development and Rural Affairs to work with the Youth Advisory Council and the Rural Communities Consultative Council to consult young people in rural and regional areas to learn their ideas about types of service they would like to use.

### **Service integration**

- 2.15 There should be more treatment, training and service integration facilities for young people with both mental health and alcohol and other drug problems.**

### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation (see also Section 3).

NSW Health and other relevant agencies will develop **service delivery guidelines** for the management of people with a co-existing mental health and substance use disorder. The guidelines will be a blueprint for services to provide effective care and treatment for people with dual disorders.

NSW Health, in consultation with other agencies, will implement **a framework for progressing early intervention and prevention in mental health** for young people in New South Wales. This framework will recognise the relationship between substance misuse and mental health and have five broad strategies:

- developing and coordinating comprehensive programs and services
- engaging young people and their families and providing comprehensive assessment and management
- developing and implementing prevention programs
- educating the community, particularly on depression and related disorders and first onset psychosis in young people
- monitoring quality and effectiveness.

### **Adolescent specific telephone line**

**2.16 An adolescent specific phone line be established to provide referral and other support for young people experiencing difficulties with drugs.**

#### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will **establish a telephone information service specifically for adolescents** on the existing Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) line which currently offers 24 hour–7 day telephone counselling, referral and support. ADIS has a comprehensive statewide referral database and can provide immediate professional counselling support to youth in need.

### **Youth accessible website for information, referral and support services**

**2.17 There be an investigation into, with a view to establishment of, a youth accessible and acceptable website that brings together young people and their families and professionals for information, referral and support services.**

#### **Government response**

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Premier has asked the Ministers for Health and Information Technology and the Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth to **review the current sites** which are working well. These sites will be adapted and promoted to bring together young people, their families and professionals for information, referral and support services.

