

# Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy



I N F O R M A T I O N   S H E E T   ■   S E P T E M B E R   2 0 0 3

In March 2001, the Government announced an \$18.8 million comprehensive plan to tackle drug and crime problems in Cabramatta.

The Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy includes:

- More police powers and resources to shut down drug houses and clear the streets of drug dealers and drug users;
- Compulsory treatment for drug users and the expansion of drug rehabilitation and treatment services;
- The City Watch program to bring police and the local community together to develop solutions to local crime; and
- The expansion of early intervention and prevention programs – like Gateways and the Cabramatta Street Team.

The rollout of initiatives began on 1 July 2001. In April 2002, the Premier tabled a report in Parliament that provided an account of progress. Results were encouraging.

The NSW Government has now allocated an additional \$9.3m to extend the Anti-Drug Strategy for two more years – to July 2007.

This Information Sheet summarises further progress in Anti-Drug Strategy initiatives.

## New Powers and resources for police

New police powers and extra policing resources were introduced under the Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy.

Since January 2001, 203 **drug houses** have been shut down. 143 of these were shut using **new drug house laws** introduced on 1 July 2001, including 35 in Cabramatta.

The Cabramatta Local Area Command charged 99 people (110 charges) under the drug premises legislation between July 2001 and 21 May 2003. Of these:

- 76 charges in Cabramatta were for being in, entering or leaving a drug house;
- 35 charges were for organising, conducting or allowing premises to be used as a drug house.

4,597 'move-on' directions were issued in Cabramatta, to 31 May 2003.

There are increased **Police resources**:

- Cabramatta Local Area Command was re-graded to Grade 1 in recognition that Cabramatta is a complex policing area;
- A new \$12.78 million Cabramatta police station is being built and is due for completion in September 2003;
- 10 new drug detective positions were created and filled; and
- The rapid response Bicycle Squad was increased from 6 to 12.

## Interpreters

The Cabramatta Local Area Command uses the Community Relations Commission's 24 hour face-to-face interpreter service. From September 2002 to June 2003, interpreters covered 13 languages.

## Better skills for police working with the community

NSW Police instituted a specialist TAFE certificate course for officers of the Cabramatta Local Area Command. Since the 'Vietnamese in Policing' course commenced in August 2001, 60 officers have completed the course. The course trains Cabramatta police in basic Vietnamese sufficient for simple conversations and to take down crime reports. Officers are also trained in appreciation of Vietnamese culture and history, and in how to work with interpreters.

In addition, 121 staff working in the Cabramatta area completed a one-off shorter course in cultural awareness and skills. These included Cabramatta general duties and bike squad police, detectives, administration staff, Target Action Group (TAG) members and members of the Department of Community Services (DoCS) Street Team.

## Crime Statistics

According to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research there was a significant reduction in 7 major crime categories in Cabramatta in the two years to December 2002:

- Robbery without a weapon (down by 50%)
- Robbery with a firearm (down by 58%)
- Robbery with a weapon other than a firearm (down by 63%)
- Break and enter dwelling (down by 26%)
- Break and enter non-dwelling (down by 39%)
- Motor vehicle theft (down by 29%)
- Stealing from a motor vehicle (down by 23%).

Other data also indicates falls in drug use in Cabramatta:

- The number of needles and syringes dispensed to drug users from public sector agencies in Cabramatta has fallen from 110,463 in the period July to December 2001 to 42,235 in the 6 month period 1 January to 30 June 2003.
- Ambulance call outs to drug overdoses has fallen from 385 in the period July to December 2000 to 24 in the period 1 January to 30 June 2003; and
- The number of drug related deaths has also fallen from 24 in the period July to December 2000 to 8 in the same period in 2002.

## CityWatch

CityWatch brings together local police, business and the community to develop responses to local crime. The CityWatch Council was established in July 2001 and meets bi-monthly.

The Council is chaired by the Local Area Commander and the Community Relations Commission organises and supports the Council's work. Members include the Member for Cabramatta, the Mayor of Fairfield, representatives of the Cabramatta and Canley Vale Chambers of Commerce, the Cabramatta Business Association, community groups and government agencies.

Some of the ways the CityWatch Council works with residents to ensure there is an exchange of information and ideas between police and the community include:

- regular newsletters
- education talks
- door-knock surveys
- forming link groups
- information on the CityWatch website.

In April 2003 CityWatch was endorsed as the PACT (Police Accountability Community Team) for Cabramatta Local Area Command.

The 2003 Police Community Forum was held on 3 April and made recommendations to address prostitution, drug issue management, theft and robbery, hidden crime, police customer service and improving the image and flow of tourists to Cabramatta.

Business surveying continues with 189 businesses surveyed in the CBD areas to-date.

Further details and publications are available on the Community Relations Commission website: [www.crc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au)

## Treatment (treatment and rehabilitation)

**Police Drug Bail and Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)** have been operating in Cabramatta since July 2001. These programs direct offenders with drug problems into treatment and rehabilitation services to prevent further drug-related crime and improve the individual's health and wellbeing.

- As at 30 June 2003, and operating through the Liverpool Court, 180 offenders had been accepted into the MERIT program, of which 65 were from Cabramatta. 89 offenders had completed MERIT, with 30 being from Cabramatta. Finally, 23 offenders were still in the program, with 5 being from Cabramatta.
- To 30 June 2003, 29 offenders had been ordered by police to attend drug treatment and assessment as a condition of bail.
- To 31 May 2003, 761 offenders had been bailed by police to not return to Cabramatta.

A **Central Assessment Service** was established to coordinate the assessment and referral of people requiring drug treatment services. At 30 June 2003, a total of 62 assessments had been completed including 25 of the 29 people referred under the Police Drug Bail scheme and 37 of the 50 referrals received under the *Intoxicated Person's Act*.

**Mental Health Services** have been expanded for clients with drug and mental health problems. From October 2001 to June 2003, there were 265 referrals to this service and an assessment completed for each referral.

Additional capacity for up to 100 **drug treatment places** has been made available at Liverpool Hospital meeting local needs. The Government continues to work with Fairfield City Council to develop a new pharmacotherapy service at Wetherill Park. The new facility will dispense medication to up to 300 people.

The **Salvation Army's Follow-on Youth Recovery Support Team Fairfield (FYRST)** has been providing an after care service to young people in recovery from drug dependences since February 2001. In October 2002, funding was allocated to FYRST under

the Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy, to provide ongoing operation of this service. From October 2002 to end June 2003, 97 clients have been case managed by FYRST.

### **Crisis accommodation**

Providing stable accommodation has helped people maintain their schooling, hold down jobs and set their life in a new direction.

Hume Community Housing was funded by the Department of Housing to provide extra crisis accommodation – 40 short-term leases and 10 long-term leases – in Cabramatta and surrounding areas.

Cabramatta Community Centre's Youth Team provides funds to furnish properties where necessary with funding from the Department of Community Services. This Team also maintains a roster of on-call workers for the Intoxicated Persons 'crisis house' which is also funded by the Department of Housing. At the end of June 2003:

- 42 people were housed in 34 tenancies – 35 people aged between 18 and 42, and 7 children;
- 53 people had previously been accommodated from 4 weeks to 9 months; and
- 5 long-term tenancies had commenced.

### **Linking drug and alcohol affected homeless people to services**

The *Intoxicated Persons Act 1979* enables police to detain intoxicated people who are found in public places and who may be a harm to themselves or others. They are then released to their families or referred to appropriate treatment, accommodation and other services.

Across NSW, Police, NSW Health and the Department of Community Services are developing protocols about how Police refer intoxicated people to appropriate services. The Cabramatta Intoxicated Persons Local Protocol became operational on 1 July 2001, to coincide with the Anti-Drug Strategy.

To 30 June 2003:

- 50 people had been referred under the Protocol to health services for immediate assessment of health risks; and
- 32 people had been accommodated for 43 nights by the Cabramatta Street Team at housing specifically for this use under the protocol.

### **Intervention and prevention**

Since 1 July 2001, the Department of Community Services' Street Team has helped homeless and drug affected young people find accommodation and access drug and alcohol treatment services. The service is based at Cabramatta Police Station and operates seven days a week.

To 30 June 2003, the Street Team:

- Made contact with 1,136 people on 2,660 occasions;
- Received 564 referrals from local police; and
- Made 1,158 referrals for people to accommodation, drug and alcohol and other services.

### **Helping families cope with illicit drug problems**

UnitingCare Burnside's *Moving Forward* project provides intensive family support, drug counselling, access to drug treatment and other services that may be needed.

From commencement in October 2001 to 30 June 2003:

- 104 families were referred to Moving Forward;
- Assistance was provided to 73 families, involving 68 drug-users, 18 at-risk young people and 105 non-using parents, children and other family members.

The Department of Community Services funds the project.

### **Linking families with schools and communities**

#### ***Gateways Program***

The **Gateways Program** started in July 2001 in the Cabramatta/Fairfield area. It helps school students who might get involved in drugs or not complete Year 12.

To June 2003:

- 519 students had received individual case management;
- 150 students had completed TAFE vocational courses;
- 96 students had completed hospitality training through the Salvation Army's Café Horizons program; and
- 320 students have had individual education plans written for them.

All high schools in Fairfield are implementing action plans to address drug education issues relevant to students in Years 7-10.

#### ***Schools as Community Centres and Primary Connect***

Schools can be an important place for promoting good relationships between children and young people, their families and the communities in which they live.

The **Families First 'Schools as Community Centres' program** is supporting families with children under 8 years at schools in the Cabramatta, Canley Vale, Bonnyrigg and Fairfield areas.

A facilitator has been employed in each of these schools to run the program.

At Fairfield, playgroups, community dance programs and community arts projects have created positive links between home, school and community. At Cabramatta, 87 sessions have been provided for parents and there were 1,539 contacts with families during the year. At Canley Vale, community meetings, playgroup activities and parent information sessions have provided a basis for closer community participation in the school. At Bonnyrigg, connections have been created with the Aboriginal community.

The *Schools as Community Centres* program is complemented by Primary Connect.

**Primary Connect** provides support for vulnerable 5-12 year old children and their families, particularly children at risk of leaving school early, drug use, offending and self harming behaviour. Identifying and dealing with problems early on will stop them becoming entrenched difficulties.

The Primary Connect Coordinator has collaborated with local services such as Community Health, Burnside and Karitane, to organise:

- A Vietnamese Parents and Family Drug Awareness Seminar which about 200 people attended;
- A seminar at the Cabramatta Police Community Youth Club on communication between parents and children within a Vietnamese family context.

### The Multicultural Drug Education Program

The Premier's Department has been working with local agencies and community advisory groups to produce drug education programs and information for families in the Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao and Chinese communities.

Each community has been using a number of ways to involve parents and to get messages across – such as radio programs, newspaper articles, parent information seminars and audio-tapes.

A phone support line for the Vietnamese community had 269 requests for assistance between August 2002 and April 2003. A Vietnamese parent education video has been produced with funding from the Department of Community Services and Premier's Department.

Fairfield City Council's Library has expanded their collection to include drug and alcohol information in Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao and Chinese languages.

### Better service responses for young people

Fairfield City Council and Premier's Department convened a Youth Action Team of government and non-government service providers in July 2001. This Team is working on ways to improve service delivery to young people in the area.

Since 2002, this group has worked together to improve referral and case management processes, assistance for homeless young people and police-youth relations.

### Expansion of Cabramatta Needle Clean-Up Program

Offenders serving periodic detention orders regularly patrol streets and public places in the Cabramatta central business district, and surrounding areas, picking up discarded syringes. In the 2 year period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2003 periodic detainees picked up a total of 25,277 one millilitre syringes. The detainees also picked up discarded packs designed to hold syringes.

The needle clean-up service provided by the periodic detainees creates a safer environment by reducing the likelihood that a member of the public may incur a needle-stick injury. The service provided by the detainees also improves the appearance of Cabramatta streets and public places.

### Cabramatta Place Project

In April 1997, the Premier's Department, in collaboration with Fairfield City Council and other agencies established the Cabramatta Place Project to tackle illicit drug use and its impact upon the Cabramatta community.

Cabramatta Place Project is working on the Anti-Drug Strategy at the local level. Work is also continuing on issues such as tourism development and improving urban amenity (led by Fairfield City Council) and employment education and training for young people.

#### Further Information

##### Need help?

If you, or someone you know, needs confidential help or advice about drugs, call the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)** on 9361 8000 (Sydney metropolitan only) or toll-free on 1800 422 599 (outside Sydney). ADIS is open 24 hours a day, providing confidential advice, information and referrals to local agencies.

As a parent, tackling drug issues can be very challenging. For advice about how to talk to young people about drug use or behavioural problems please contact **Parent Line** toll-free on **13 20 55**.

##### Reporting Drug Crime

Any information you have about drug crime, even if you think it's unimportant, may help the Police make an arrest. To report drug-related crime call **Crime Stoppers** toll-free on **1800 333 000**.

##### Want to know more?

If you would like more information about the NSW Government's response to the drug problem, visit **[www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au)**