

Together Against Drugs

WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse Action Plan 1999-2001

Statement by the Minister

Drug abuse continues to be a significant community problem nationally and internationally. Western Australia is no exception. In particular, the continuing increase in world production of illicit drugs poses a greater challenge with each year.

The Together Against Drugs strategy follows the Premier's Taskforce on Drug Abuse. It started in 1997 with a comprehensive two year action plan tackling the abuse of legal and illicit drugs in Western Australia. The strategy has developed essential programs including education to prevent drug abuse in schools, for parents, the general public and for drug users themselves. We have expanded health and community support services throughout the State and law enforcement efforts have been targeted both at high level and street dealing of drugs as well as alcohol abuse. Importantly, we have provided substantial support for the broad community to take action against drug abuse in our towns and suburbs.

The State Government has provided substantial funding to the Together Against Drugs strategy. Since the release of the first action plan, the State Government has increased annual funding levels for drug abuse related services by 52%, bringing it from \$27 million from 1996/1997 to more than \$41 million in 1999/2000.

The fact remains that there are no simple answers. There are no single solutions to the complex problem of drug abuse we face as a community. The comprehensive approach of Together Against Drugs aims to tackle drug abuse at every possible level in the community. It involves the whole of government working in partnership with the whole community.

The second action plan for 1999 to 2001 builds on the strong established foundations of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse. It involves over one hundred specific initiatives, including both new developments as well as strengthening and expanding established strategies. It sets out the medium strategic directions for each area of activity.

In the next two years, over \$91 million will be spent by the State and Federal Governments in Western Australia on services and programs to tackle drug abuse.

Key developments for the second Together Against Drugs action plan for 1999 to 2001 include:

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

The State Government is committed to this concerted and comprehensive strategy against drug abuse as a major priority. We will be relentless in our efforts to support individuals, families and communities working Together Against Drugs.

Rhonda Parker MLA

Minister Responsible for WA Drug Abuse Strategy

Policy framework

The policy framework of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach and is based on two principles:

- first and foremost, opposition to drug abuse, encompassing strategies to reduce demand for drugs and the supply of drugs; and
- second, harm reduction, recognising the need for strategies to reduce the risks and harm to those continuing to use drugs and to the wider community whilst taking care that such strategies do not encourage or normalise drug abuse.

Working in partnership

Statewide strategy development and coordination across government is achieved through the Minister Responsible for WA Drug Abuse Strategy and the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office:

- working with key coordination structures (the Ministerial Council on Drug Abuse Strategy and Senior Officers Group, as well as the State Education Coordination Group, Drug Abuse Services Group and the Alcohol and Drug Research and Policy Forum); and
- supporting and integrating the activity of the major participating government departments (Health Department, Police Service, Education Department, Aboriginal Affairs Department, Family and Children's Services and the Ministry of Justice), as well as maintaining specific partnerships with others (Office of Road Safety, Office of Racing, Gaming and Liquor and the Office of Youth Affairs).

Regional coordination is achieved through Community Drug Service Teams working in conjunction with Safer WA Committees, and supporting the participation of key agencies at a local level as well as action by the community.

Local community action and participation involves Local Drug Action Groups as well as key partnerships with local governments, sporting associations, pharmacy, businesses and tertiary institutions.

Working in partnership to implement a comprehensive strategy means that each of the areas of activity - education, health and community support services, law enforcement and community action - are not separate responses but are part of a whole approach where each enhances the impact of the others for the benefit of individuals, families and communities.

Action plan

Education to prevent drug abuse

Schools

Effective drug education in all schools will continue to be supported by the School Drug Education Project's establishment of regional networks and a school grants program, as well as through:

- regional as well as "whole of school" professional development programs;
- regular updates to the published curriculum materials and resource index for teachers, parents and students;
- drug policies and protocols in all schools;
- involvement of parents and the broader community; and
- monitoring of implementation and evaluation of outcomes.

School and community education will be supported by the Police Service's alcohol and drug advisers, school based and crime prevention officers utilising the GURD drug education materials and program.

Parents

Parent drug education opportunities will be expanded through a new program involving a partnership between the Health Department, the Community Drug Service Teams and Local Drug Action Groups providing a variety of education materials and events in the community.

Public campaigns

Drug Aware illicit drug public education campaigns will provide a continuing and comprehensive focus on both specific drugs and support for parents, with a new campaign on psychostimulants to complement established heroin and marijuana campaigns as well as a youth strategy to integrate drug specific campaigns and expand community activities. Integration with national programs will facilitate an expanded presence.

The Host Responsibility Program's Be a Good Host campaign will continue alcohol abuse public education promoting community support for bar staff to refuse service and social hosts to encourage moderation.

100% Control & Respect Yourself alcohol abuse public education campaigns will continue to be developed to address behaviour of young people and adults, and have an expanded presence through integration with national programs.

QUIT tobacco campaigns will continue to be developed to address behaviour of young people and adults, and have an expanded presence through integration with national programs.

Community initiatives

The role of *Drug Aware* community pharmacies in supporting families and providing intervention for drug users will be expanded. They will continue to support public education campaigns and harm reduction initiatives.

Local Drug Action Groups and community partnerships will provide continuing support for public education campaigns.

Drug users will be reached with carefully targeted harm reduction education initiatives, focussing on blood borne viruses and heroin overdoses. A variety of materials, peer outreach programs and opportunities afforded through needle and syringe programs to engage drug users into treatment will be continually developed and renewed.

Road safety

A targeted drug and driving prevention campaign will be developed in addition to a continuing focus on road trauma due to alcohol and other drugs in public education programs by the Office of Road Safety, the Health Department and the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office, a targeted drugs and driving prevention campaign will be developed.

Health and community support services

Health and community support services will continue to improve outcomes through the promotion and adoption of evidence based and best practice treatment interventions.

As the general health sector builds its capacity to provide alcohol and other drug interventions, practical linkages will be clearly articulated and fostered between general practitioners and regional hospitals with Community Drug Service Teams and other community based alcohol and drug services.

Health services

The Health Department Drug Strategy will be implemented through both specialist alcohol and drug health services, and these services together with the Alcohol and Drug Policy Branch will provide support to the general health sector.

The Health Department will continue to make a comprehensive contribution to prevention and treatment activities through professional and community education, research and evaluation, services for Aboriginal people and other populations with specific health needs, and its legislative responsibilities.

Treatment for heroin

Availability of naltrexone and other pharmacotherapies for heroin addiction will be expanded through the Health Department's *Next Step - Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services* providing a clinical trial of naltrexone and buprenorphine maintenance.

Expanding treatment opportunities

General practitioners in metropolitan and regional areas will be supported with education, training and clinical consultancy and through professional networks to:

- provide drug withdrawal support;
- continue to expand the availability of methadone treatment as necessary to meet demand;
- provide naltrexone treatment;
- provide other pharmacotherapies, such as buprenorphine and LAAM, as these become available; and
- integrate these treatments with specialist health and community support services.

Detoxification provided at regional hospitals will be supported by general practitioners and Community Drug Service Teams.

Screening and brief intervention services will be supported and promoted in the general health sector.

A specialist alcohol and drug medical position will be established at Royal Perth Hospital.

Mental health services

The treatment of psychiatric patients with drug problems will be enhanced with the development of the mental health system's practice and partnerships with alcohol and other drug services.

Community support services

Putting offenders into treatment

A comprehensive diversion strategy for adults and juveniles, and corresponding expansion of treatment services, will be implemented in conjunction with more vigorous policing of drug use to engage more offenders in treatment through:

- police diversion of first time offenders into compulsory assessment and participation in treatment as part of a nationally consistent approach;
- expansion of the Court Diversion Service for repeat offenders for simple drug offences and minor property offences; and

- a drug court regime for more serious drug and property offences and those offenders requiring more intensive supervision.

The Ministry of Justice's Drug Management Strategy will be progressively implemented to provide a comprehensive range of initiatives to tackle the alcohol and other drug problems of offenders including:

- expanded treatment opportunities throughout community based sentences;
- expanded treatment opportunities throughout the prison sentence;
- examination of drug free units in prisons; and
- expansion of the Prison to Parole Program to support prisoners and young people in detention completing sentences and ensure they continue treatment upon release.

Intensive support and compulsory intervention

Opportunities to engage more young people at risk into treatment for their drug addiction more effectively, through intensive support, family initiated assistance and compulsory intervention, will be progressed through broad community consultation and a feasibility study.

Working in partnership with parents

A range of initiatives to promote *Working in partnership with parents* will be implemented including:

- telephone support for parents by parents, linked to the 24 hour Parent Drug Information Service;
- the Parent Drug Information Service providing follow up for families;
- local community support networks for parents, linked to Local Drug Action Groups and supported by Community Drug Service Teams;
- publication of parent friendly education and information materials;
- regional forums to bring parents, professional services and community groups together;
- research and education to develop and promote best practice in family support by professional alcohol and drug treatment services; and
- family support services provided by alcohol and drug agencies being expanded as necessary to continue to meet demand.

Sobering up services

Sobering up centre services will be extended to accommodate youth and people who are intoxicated due to drugs other than alcohol, and provide linkages to continuing treatment, beginning with Kalgoorlie.

New sobering up services will be established in Midland, Geraldton and Wyndham, and will accommodate youth and people who are intoxicated due to drugs other than alcohol and provide linkages to continuing treatment.

Reaching drug users

Needle exchange services provide a key opportunity to directly reach drug users. The capacity to engage clients into treatment and to provide well targeted harm reduction education regarding blood borne viruses and drug overdose will be further developed.

Expanding treatment opportunities

A Community Drug Service Team will be established for the inner city area of Perth. The twelfth team in the State will provide linkages to continuing treatment, support for inner city welfare services and support for the community to prevent drug abuse.

Building on the innovative workplace learning programs developed with Family and Children's Services and the Ministry of Justice, practice development programs will be developed with:

- the youth services sector to enhance the extent to which these services provide interventions aimed at reducing drug abuse by young people;
- Aboriginal services and communities; and
- prisons to assist custodial staff to support prisoners overcoming drug addiction.

Protocols and other formal linkages will be developed for Community Drug Service Teams and other alcohol and drug services with supported accommodation and employment services.

Schools will be supported through the School Drug Counselling Project to ensure that drug abuse incidents receive appropriate intervention and pastoral care and treatment as necessary, including support for families, developed in conjunction with Community Drug Service Teams as part of the School Drug Education Project.

Law enforcement

Targeting illicit drugs

High level drug supply will continue to be targeted with Police Service task forces in cooperation with the Australian Federal Police and customs agencies, and the Organised Crime Squad supporting local operations.

Street level dealing will be a continuing focus of local operations to prevent the establishment of an open public drug culture in Western Australia.

Targeting alcohol abuse

Police partnerships with licensees, local governments and communities will continue to be developed and expanded through Alcohol Accords, to limit harmful alcohol supply practices.

Regional Police Service alcohol and drug advisers will continue to work with uniformed officers to ensure regular visits to licensed premises, and with inspectors of the Liquor Licensing Division of the Office of Racing, Gaming and Liquor regarding obligations and responsibilities under the Liquor Licensing Act.

Putting offenders into treatment

The Cannabis Cautioning and Mandatory Education System will be evaluated and adopted statewide, if initial indications that it is a more effective way to deal with marijuana users are confirmed.

A comprehensive diversion strategy for adults and juveniles, and corresponding expansion of treatment services, will be implemented in conjunction with more vigorous policing of drug use, to engage more offenders in treatment through:

- police diversion of first time offenders into compulsory assessment and participation in treatment as part of a nationally consistent approach;
- expansion of the Court Diversion Service for repeat offenders for simple drug offences and minor property offences; and
- a drug court regime for more serious drug and property offences and offenders requiring more intensive supervision.

Police working in partnership

Police partnerships will continue to be developed with Community Drug Service Teams, Local Drug Action Groups and various health services to integrate law enforcement with initiatives to prevent drug abuse and reduce its associated harms.

Road safety

The development of technology to test for driving under the influence of drugs other than alcohol will continue to be monitored and a practical schedule of penalties will be developed when this is feasible.

Stronger legislation

A substantial legislative program will include:

- amendments to the Sentencing Act 1995 to provide for a compulsory treatment order;
- amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 to reflect the stronger penalties and stricter procedures recommended by the Parliamentary Select Committee into the Misuse of Drugs Act;
- an Intoxicated Persons Bill to support police to deal with all intoxicated people and dispose of legal intoxicants; and
- a new Bill to strengthen confiscation of assets from drug suppliers through automatic (upon conviction) and civil (non conviction based) procedures with all proceeds used to tackle drug abuse.

Community action

Local Drug Action Groups

The network of Local Drug Action Groups throughout the State will be increased to 80 groups, providing the major avenue for the broad community to take local action in towns and suburbs to help prevent and reduce abuse of legal and illicit drugs.

Sports partnerships

Sports partnerships in the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse promoting the drug free message will be expanded to encompass a range of sports building on existing partnerships with surfing, football, baseball, soccer, netball, and swimming.

A training and leadership program for young elite sports people will be implemented to support the drug free role models program.

Community pharmacy

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (WA Branch) will establish the Pharmacy Foundation of Australia to support a range of innovative initiatives to tackle drug abuse in partnership with the community pharmacy network and suppliers of health care and education, building on the prominent role of community pharmacy in the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse.

Local government partnerships

Partnerships with local governments will be further developed to promote development of drug policies and specific strategies which support local treatment, prevention and harm reduction programs.

Business partnerships

Partnerships with business will build on the *Drug Aware* business program to promote drug free workplaces and the availability of support services where problems occur.

TAFE and university partnerships

Partnerships with tertiary education institutions will be developed including universities and TAFE colleges, providing for campus drug policies and education programs to prevent drug abuse and reduce harms.

Leaders against drug abuse

The leaders against drug abuse membership and role will be expanded particularly to support public education to prevent drug abuse.

Specific population and drug initiatives

Aboriginal people

Aboriginal alcohol and other drug services available through specialist agencies, Office of Aboriginal Health programs, community controlled Aboriginal health organisations and Community Drug Service Teams will be progressively enhanced.

Education and training programs will be expanded for Aboriginal services and communities.

The School Drug Education Project will continue to support the development and implementation of culturally appropriate professional and community development programs, and curriculum materials, for remote communities.

Aboriginal patrols and sobering up centres will be more closely linked to improve support available to these services to strengthen their role in communities.

Local Drug Action Groups in remote Aboriginal communities will continue to be developed to provide a focus and funding for local prevention activities.

A comprehensive State Solvents Abuse Plan will foster collaborative programs across government and the community throughout the State, through the agencies participating in the State Solvents Working Party convened by the Office of Aboriginal Health in conjunction with the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office.

Limiting the availability of alcohol in specific areas will be supported where this is sought by the local community.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations

Education and information materials to assist families and individuals will continue to be developed in consultation with the various communities.

Education and training for CALD welfare organisations and with alcohol and drug treatment services will be provided to support agencies to initiate treatment interventions and develop linkages.

General practitioners working with CALD communities will be supported to provide drug intervention, drug withdrawal support and pharmacotherapies.

Tobacco

QUIT and other tobacco campaigns will continue to be developed to address behaviour of young people and adults, and have an expanded presence through integration with national programs.

Health professionals will be supported with education and training to increase the extent to which they can provide smoking cessation interventions.

Smoking cessation support and programs will be expanded, both for the general public and populations with a high prevalence of smoking such as psychiatric patients, some CALD communities and Aboriginal people.

Community action by Local Drug Action Groups, other community groups and schools will be promoted and supported, including through a new resource kit focusing on curtailing supply to minors, establishment of smoke free places and strategies for cessation.

The Health Department, local governments and police will support local action to ensure compliance with tobacco control legislation.

Alcohol abuse

The Alcohol Abuse Reduction Forum involving government agencies, academic institutions and non government organisations working in cooperation with the alcohol industry, will continue to identify and develop opportunities for preventing and reducing alcohol abuse.

The second phase of the Host Responsibility Program's Be a Good Host campaign will continue alcohol abuse public education promoting community support for bar staff to refuse service and social hosts to encourage moderation. The program will continue to provide an umbrella to integrate industry training, a strong and highly visible level of law enforcement, and community action initiatives.

Alcohol Accords will be actively managed to maintain effective police, local government, licensee and community partnerships to limit harmful alcohol supply practices and improve standards of service.

Local community participation in the licensing process in accordance with recent amendments to the Liquor Licensing Act will be encouraged and supported through Local Drug Action Groups and other local community bodies.

Alcohol accords and local community input will be actively considered to inform conditions placed on liquor licences.

100% Control and Respect Yourself alcohol abuse public education campaigns, will continue to be developed to address behaviour of young people and adults and have an expanded presence through integration with national programs.

The School Drug Education Project will continue to place an appropriate focus on preventing alcohol abuse.

Heroin

Availability of naltrexone and other pharmacotherapies will be expanded through the Health Department's *Next Step - Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services* providing clinical trials of naltrexone and buprenorphine treatment.

Methadone treatment available through general practitioners will continue to be expanded as necessary to meet demand.

Drug Aware public education campaigns focussing on heroin will be maintained and continually developed.

Comprehensive opiate overdose prevention strategies including emergency management, education and outreach services, will continue to be developed, expanded and renewed. This will continue to

involve ambulance and hospital medical services, the Health Department, alcohol and drug agencies, the WA Substance Users Association, the Police Service, the Pharmacy Guild and the National Drug Research Institute, coordinated by the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office.

A feasibility study into the provision of narcan (a heroin antidote) to drug users and their families will inform the extent to which this can occur safely.

Drug users will be reached with carefully targeted harm reduction education initiatives, focusing on blood borne viruses and heroin overdoses. A variety of materials and peer outreach programs will be continually developed and renewed.

Cannabis

Drug Aware public education campaigns focusing on the harms of cannabis will be maintained and continually developed.

The Cannabis Cautioning and Mandatory Education System will be evaluated and adopted Statewide if initial indications that it is a more effective way to deal with first time cannabis offenders are confirmed.

The School Drug Education Project will continue to place a strong focus on preventing cannabis use.

Stimulant and hallucinogenic drugs

Stimulant and hallucinogenic drugs will be the focus of the next phase of the *Drug Aware* public education campaign.

Amphetamine production and abuse will be monitored closely and any resurgence will be met with expanded law enforcement, treatment and prevention responses.

Opportunities to reduce the use of stimulant and hallucinogenic drugs and their associated harms will be the focus of a major consultation with night venues and the cooperative development of practical strategies.

Solvents

The supply of solvents will be discouraged through Local Drug Action Groups, Community Drug Services Teams and police continuing to work with retailers, using a new Solvent Supply Resource Kit and the existing Code of Conduct.

Specific treatment programs, case management and shared care will continue to be provided by specialist services and Community Drug Service Teams.

Petrol sniffing problems in remote communities will continue to be the focus of interagency and community programs coordinated by the Office of Aboriginal Health.

Community wide initiatives developed by local communities will be supported through project grants for youth activities and community action available to Local Drug Action Groups.

A comprehensive State Solvents Abuse Plan will foster collaborative programs across government and the community throughout the State, through the agencies participating in the State Solvents Working Party convened by the Office of Aboriginal Health in conjunction with the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office.

Steroids and other performance drugs

Environments where steroid abuse may occur will be the focus of targeted prevention and harm reduction education initiatives.

National policy development to limit diversion of steroid products will be pursued with the responsible professional associations.

Periodic law enforcement operations, including urinalysis of security staff provided for under the Security and Related Activity (Control) Act, will continue as well as being undertaken to support targeted education.

Medical management and treatment opportunities for dependent users will be developed with general practitioners.

A drugs in sport project will provide health and legal information about performance enhancing and all other drugs to athletes, coaches, trainers, managers and parents involved in sport at all levels from the elite to junior club level, through a partnership of Sports Medicine Australia, Ministry of Sport and Recreation, Australian Sports Drug Agency and the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office.

Pharmaceuticals

Opportunities to expand education for patients regarding the safe use of pharmaceuticals will be pursued.

The program to limit “doctor shopping” for addictive drugs as provided by the Commonwealth Health Insurance Commission will be supported with linkages to treatment services and training opportunities for general practitioners.

Benzodiazepine abuse will be the focus of a consultation with medical practitioners and health services to develop further education and support strategies.

Information and research

WA Research Agenda

A WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse research program will be established, with commissioned research commencing in the following areas:

- supporting families to prevent drug abuse;
- building communities’ capacity to prevent drug abuse;
- the role of cannabis and other drugs in suicide;
- monitoring dispositions for offenders under the Misuse of Drugs Act; and
- illicit drugs and road safety.

An annual research, policy and practice symposium will be established to promote the translation of research into practice.

Monitoring prevalence, harms and activity

Assessments of the prevalence of drug abuse will be published annually drawing from the surveys conducted nationally and in Western Australia by the Health Department, focussing on national drug consumption (1998 for 1999), national secondary school students (1999 for 2000), and WA adult tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug consumption (2000 for 2001).

A compendium of drug abuse indicators will be produced biannually to provide a detailed description of the extent of drug abuse and its associated harms.

Key activity indicators across the whole of government will be collected annually. WA will participate in an expanded national early warning system to identify emerging drug abuse trends.

Informing the community

Local statistical profiles to support communities to target prevention activity will continue to be developed and improved as data is developed.

Analysis of key issues will be published regularly in statistical bulletins.

The WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse website (www.wa.gov.au/drugwestaus/) will contain up to date information on the effects of drugs, prevention and treatment programs, drug abuse trends, and analysis of key issues.

Coordination and structure

Working in partnership

The WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office and the key coordination structures (Ministerial Council on Drug Abuse Strategy, Seniors Officers Group, State Drug Education Coordination Group, Drug Abuse Services Coordination Group, Alcohol and Drug Research and Policy Forum, and Safer WA Committees in regions) will continue to support partnerships and implementation of strategies across the whole of government and through the whole of the community.

Regional action

Regional alcohol and drug action plans will be developed with support from the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office through Safer WA Committees and Community Drug Service Teams.

Responding to emerging issues

The Action Plan for 1999 to 2001 charts the Government's strategy for the next two years. It is not a static program. Rather, it extends the capacity of the Government, its agencies and the community to work together in partnership to address both existing problems and to identify and tackle new issues as they emerge.