

The Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign

How To Develop A Campaign Aimed At
Preventing The Use of 'Party Drugs'

Eleanor Costello

March 2001

Published by

Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office &
Alcohol and Other Drugs Program
Health Enhancement, Public Health Division
Health Department of WA



Web Only Document

This publication is available online at <http://www.wa.gov.au/drugwestaus/>

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	1
Psychostimulant use.....	1
Psychostimulant mortality	1
Psychostimulant morbidity	1
Economic costs associated with other drug use.....	1
Addressing the issue	2
BACKGROUND	3
CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT.....	3
TARGET GROUPS.....	4
AIM AND OBJECTIVES	4
Primary objectives	4
Secondary objective.....	4
STRATEGIES.....	5
Media related strategies	5
a) <i>Press Advertisement targeting 14 to 24-year-olds</i>	5
b) <i>Radio advertisement targeting 14 to 24-year-olds</i>	6
c) <i>Advertisement targeted to parents (caregivers) of 10 to 17-year-olds</i>	7
d) <i>Convenience advertising targeting 18 to 24-year-olds</i>	7
Campaign launch.....	7
Unpaid media.....	7
Campaign support strategies.....	7
Youth illicit drug education project.....	7
Resources and publications	7
Referral and support.....	7
Regional strategy	7
Sponsorship competition.....	8
Merchandise	8
EVALUATION	8
CONCLUSION	8
CAMPAIGN RECOMMENDATIONS	8
Be comprehensive.....	8
Involve the target group.....	8
Keep messages credible and salient.....	9
Pre-test strategies:	9
SOURCES	9

THE DRUG AWARE PSYCHOSTIMULANTS CAMPAIGN

HOW TO DEVELOP A CAMPAIGN AIMED AT PREVENTING THE USE OF 'PARTY DRUGS'

Eleanor Costello

Introduction

Recent research shows increasing use of psychostimulant drugs by young Australians. This paper discusses why this is a problem and one of the ways this is being addressed within Western Australia.

Psychostimulant use

A number of lead indicators (National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 1998; Australian Illicit Drug Report, 1998-99; and calls to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service) suggest that there has been an increase in the use of some amphetamines and other psychostimulant drugs by young Australians, with first use starting at high school age.

Illicit drug use in Western Australia is highest among 18 to 24-year-olds, and higher among males than females. In 1997, among 18 to 24-year-olds, 30%, 21% and 17% had ever used LSD, amphetamines and ecstasy respectively, and between 3% and 6% had used these in the past month. Overall, one in ten (9%) had used at least one of these three drugs in the past month. In 1996, 11%, 7% and 4% of 12 to 17-year school students had ever used LSD, amphetamines and ecstasy respectively, and between 1% and 4% had used these in the past month. Overall, 7% of the 12 to 17-year-olds had used at least one of these drugs in the past month.^{7,16}

Psychostimulant mortality

In Western Australia between 1985 and 1996 there were 862 deaths due to the use of drugs other than alcohol and tobacco (that is, illicit drugs, or licit drugs other than tobacco and alcohol, where these are used inappropriately) (560 males, 303 females) – an average of 72 deaths each year.² Of these deaths 5 deaths were attributed to amphetamines and other psycho-stimulants (4 males and 1 females) and 3 deaths were attributed to hallucinogens (all males).²

Psychostimulant morbidity

Approximately 1960 Western Australians are admitted to hospital each year as a result of the illicit use of drugs. Between 1991 and 1995 there were 333 cocaine, amphetamine and other psychostimulants caused hospital admissions in WA, which amounted to 1238 bed days. A further 126 admissions were reported for hallucinogens (69) and cannabis (57) (in total, 416 bed days).³

In Western Australia, reports of first ever admissions of drug-related mental disorders (excluding alcohol) indicate that mental illness associated with drug use shows a steep increase within the 15 to 19-year-old-age-group, and peaks at 20 to 24-years-of-age.¹

Economic costs associated with other drug use

The consequences of drug abuse are wide reaching, involving a combination of economic and social costs. It was estimated that in 1992 the tangible and non-tangible cost of licit and illicit drug abuse in Australia was \$18,844.5 million.⁴

Tangible costs for drugs other than tobacco and alcohol in Australia in 1992 were \$1,273.6 million and intangible costs were \$435.4 million.⁴

Tangible costs for Western Australia have been calculated for drug abuse in 1992 amounting to \$1,884.5 million of which \$168.4 million represents illicit drug use. Intangible costs are difficult to calculate and as yet are not available for Western Australia.¹

Addressing the issue

The prevention of drug abuse is a critical priority of government bodies and strategies have been developed to address community concerns.¹

In 1995 the Western Australian Taskforce on Drug Abuse recognised the need for on-going public education focusing on illicit drug use.¹ The issues outlined by the Taskforce are still a concern and are being addressed through strategies outlined in the Western Australian Drug Strategy.

Key documents recommend that there be a greater emphasis on health campaigns dealing with the harms associated with illicit drugs especially in relation to young people.^{1,11}

The Taskforce Report recommended drug education programs be directed at groups such as parents, young people, the broader community and professional groups.

Current public and school education initiatives complement each other providing a multifaceted approach.

The School Drug Education Project (SDEP) is a joint initiative of the Education Department, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools as part of the Western Australian Drug Strategy. The School Drug Education Project encompasses five key strategies:

- professional and school development programs, which have included all schools in development programs;
- an outcome based curriculum for kindergarten to year 12 and other education resources distributed to all schools;
- school drug policies and protocols for all schools;
- involvement of parents and the community; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

However, generally within the syllabus illicit drugs other than cannabis are not significantly addressed until year 10 (15 years-of-age).

Research into patterns of drug use suggests that by this stage young people are already reporting experimental use of illicit drugs.^{1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 16}

The Taskforce Report also recognised the need for drug education programs to be truly comprehensive. It was recommended that school education be complemented by a mass media drug awareness public education campaign. The report also recommended that Government agencies should ensure that media programs are complimented with comprehensive and significant support strategies.

Mass media campaigns should aim to promote prevention, addressing the complex mix of intra-personal and interpersonal issues as well as environmental factors.¹⁵

Young people have acknowledged that they require accurate and relevant information about drugs in order to make their own decisions about drug use. Formative research for the Psychostimulants

Campaign indicated that most young people accessed drug information from their friends rather than teachers or parents and that this information was often misinforming. Current evidence suggests that providing young people with accurate information that is presented in a credible manner, would be viewed with approval by them.^{8,9,10,14.}

If behaviour change is desired, the necessary services need to be available to maximise the chances of a positive behavioural outcome. Only with selected behaviours, and then only when a certain level of motivation pre-exists, will media messages alone result in behaviour change. Support for change needs to come from key stakeholders such as young people, families, peer groups, community and government organisations.¹³

These factors were carefully considered during the development of our state's comprehensive Drug Aware Psychostimulant Campaign. During the planning and development of the campaign, extensive consultation was conducted with key stakeholders. Out of all groups consulted in the campaign development, young people's contributions were the most valuable in tackling the difficulties faced in developing believable prevention messages addressing the use of 'party drugs' or psychostimulants.

Background

Since 1996 the Public Education component of the Drug Aware Program has been delivered by the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office (WADASO) and the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program, Public Health Division of the Health Department of Western Australia, as a collaborative partnership program.

Drug Aware, Public Education Campaigns use a two pronged approach. Both young people and parents are targeted in order to impact on a young person's likelihood of using illicit drugs.

The Program's aim is to prevent or delay the onset of use and reduce the harm associated with illicit drugs by:

- decreasing the attractiveness of drug use among young people;
- decreasing young people's intentions or their likelihood of trialing/using illicit drugs; and
- increasing effective communication between parents and young people about drug use issues.

To date the Drug Aware Program has focused on the following issues: Parent communication with young people about illicit drug issues, Heroin Prevention and Marijuana Education.

Campaign Development

The Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign was first conducted in January to March 2000 and focused on amphetamines, LSD and other hallucinogens, ecstasy and cocaine. The campaign has since been rerun between December 2000 to February 2001 this year. The Psychostimulants Campaign overtime aims to decrease the attractiveness of psychostimulant drug use and to decrease the likelihood of use and/or trial of psychostimulant drugs among young people.

The development of the Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign has been the most challenging of the state's three public youth education campaigns on illicit drugs. The difficulty faced was in making the campaign messages relating to 'party drugs' or psychostimulants credible and believable to this target group, given the association these drugs have with youth recreational activities. For this reason youth involvement became an essential element throughout the campaign planning of strategies and their development.

Consultation was conducted with Community Drug Service Teams, Local Drug Action Groups, the Alcohol and Drug Information Service, Youth Advisory Councils and Public Health Units. Young

people were consulted both formally through ad-testing and focus groups, and informally through youth reference groups.

This campaign consisted of the following strategies designed to increase young people's awareness of the social and health implication of using these drugs:

- press and radio mass media advertising,
- convenience advertising and the distribution of information cards in schools, nightclubs, dance parties, TAFEs and universities;
- merchandise and sponsorship activities,
- school-based and community support strategies (both metropolitan and regional), and
- publication support consisting of information fact sheets, mini information cards, posters and community support kits.

Target Groups

The primary target group for the Drug Aware Program's Psychostimulants Campaign was:

- 14 to 24-year-old non-regular users of psychostimulant drugs.

(Non-regular users were defined as those that either didn't use at all or used on the rare occasion.)

The secondary target groups for the Drug Aware Psychostimulant Campaign was:

- 16 to 24-year-old regular users of psychostimulant drugs, and
- parents of 10 to 17-year-olds.

Aim and Objectives

Over time the Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign aims to decrease the attractiveness of psychostimulant drug use and to decrease the likelihood of use and/or trial of psychostimulant drugs among young people by:

Primary objectives

The primary objectives were:

- increasing knowledge about the social and health consequences of psychostimulant use among young people aged 14 to 24-years-old;
- increase the salience of social and health consequences of psychostimulant use among young people aged 14 to 24-years-old; and
- reinforce existing beliefs about the negative consequences of using psychostimulant drugs.

Secondary objective

The secondary objective was to:

- increase the availability of credible information on illicit drugs and their potential harms.

Strategies

The following comprehensive range of strategies were implemented in the 2000 and 2001 Psychostimulants Campaigns:

Media related strategies

A series of three radio and four press advertisements were developed in close consultation with young people as a major component of the Psychostimulants Campaign. In addition to the youth press advertisements a parent ad was developed to address communication issues between parents and young people. The advertising mediums chosen were cost effective and maintained an adequate reach to the target group.

The following is a summary of the results on pre-testing of the creative concepts. Copies of press advertisements are attached.

a) Press Advertisement targeting 14 to 24-year-olds

The press advertisements were developed around two themes. The first was based on a series of three advertisements focusing on the consequences of LSD, Speed and Ecstasy use respectively. The second theme was developed around the issue of the unknown chemical content of psychostimulant drugs and the potential harm associated with their use. All advertisements referred readers on to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service, a twenty-four hour counselling and information service.

The 'consequences advertisements' performed well in attracting attention. They were interesting and communicated the desired message. The press advertisements were found to be more effective than radio advertisements at providing information worth remembering.

The qualitative research revealed that the likely effects of all executions in the consequences concept were limited by their focus on the short-term health effects. The research recommended that the most severe short-term and mid-term effects that were found to be credible should be retained while the longer-term effects acknowledged in the focus groups as being credible should be added to provide more motivation to abstain from using these drugs.

LSD consequences advertisement

'Of course some advertising is misleading'

The message taken out by almost 60% of respondent was that 'you may have a bad experience' on LSD. In order to strengthen the message in this advertisement details about recurring flashbacks were added to the advertisement copy. Flashbacks were acknowledged in focus groups as a credible serious mid-long term health effect that they couldn't control.

Ecstasy consequences advertisement

'Her body is dangerously overheated. But, on ecstasy, Sarah thinks she is cool.'

The ecstasy advertisement was seen as the strongest of the consequences advertisements, due to the more serious sounding nature of the effects in the text, the medical terminology assisted in achieving this effect. The two main messages taken out were that 'you may not be aware of the harmful effects that ecstasy is having' and that 'you may become dehydrated'.

Speed consequences advertisement

'Before you think about using speed, ask yourself were you want to go in such a hurry'

The amphetamine advertisement had the weakest message takeout, which was that 'you can get in trouble' if you take speed. In order to strengthen this advertisement the text was further developed to include information about the risk of dependency associated with 'speed' use. Dependency was acknowledged in focus groups as a credible serious mid – long term health effect with strong negative social consequences also associated with it.

Content advertisement - ecstasy

'Pick which one of these is ecstasy. (The other is a cocktail of caffeine, smack and insecticide.)'

The 'ecstasy content advertisement' was rated through the quantitative pre-testing as one of the strongest concepts ever tested. The message communicated was very clear and scored well on prompted reactions. A high proportions said it was worth remembering (93%), catches your attention (90%), was interesting (89%) and worrying (86%).

The results from the focus groups were also strong, with both users and non-users of ecstasy saying that the advertisement would make them think about taking the drug. It was hypothesised, based on qualitative research, that the potential risk or threat associated with this concept was deemed greater than that of the consequences series of advertisements. In the consequences advertisements the risk was seen in most cases to be within the users control (ie. will only happen if the drugs are over-used). In the content advertisement the risk was perceived as being unknown and outside of the users control and therefore of more concern to them.

b) Radio advertisement targeting 14 to 24-year-olds

The speed and LSD radio advertisements focused on the consequences of using these drugs, while the ecstasy advertisement focused on ecstasy content. All advertisements referred listeners on to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service, a twenty-four hour counselling and information service. The radio advertisements were found to be more effective than the press advertisements at attracting attention.

LSD consequences advertisement

The LSD consequences radio advertisement performed the best. The main message taken out by over half respondents was that of the risk of a bad experience and the mental health consequences. The focus groups noted that the changes in the music tempo was effective in portraying the message.

Ecstasy content advertisement

Initially the ecstasy radio advertisement focused on the consequences of ecstasy use. Only one third of respondents took out the correct message for the ecstasy consequences advertisement. Recommendations were made to drop this advertisement and replace it with a radio version of the very successful content press advertisement, which focused mainly on the impurities within ecstasy.

Amphetamine consequences advertisement

The speed advertisement did not put over as clear a message as the other two radio advertisements. The consequences described were not seen as serious (equated with being drunk). The sound effects in the initial speed radio advertisement were not viewed as being credible. It was recommended that the consequences be strengthened and the sounds made more realistic.

c) Advertisement targeted to parents (caregivers) of 10 to 17-year-olds

'This is exactly the opposite way to stop your kids taking party drugs'

The parent advertisement focused on communication between parents and their children about issues relating to 'party drugs'.

d) Convenience advertising targeting 18 to 24-year-olds

Convenience advertising consists of a poster within a perspex frame. A series of convenience advertisements were developed around the drugs addressed within the Psychostimulants Campaign. This strategy provided low level media that could be delivered where exposure to psychostimulant type drugs was most likely to take place.

This form of media allowed flexibility as to the type of message seen by at risk groups of young people, this was achieved through the placement of advertisements at venues with at risk clientele.

Campaign launch

A media launch was conducted to generate public interest in the campaign's strategies.

Unpaid media

Unpaid media was achieved through interviews with campaign staff and young people involved in the campaign generating valuable unpaid media exposure.

Campaign support strategies

Media is one component of a comprehensive public education campaign. While the media raises awareness, support strategies increase the target group's ownership and involvement in the campaign and the likelihood of attitudinal change in the longer term.

Within the time and resource constraints of this campaign the following support strategies were developed and implemented to support the media component:

Youth illicit drug education project

An ongoing project that provides community education, training, support and consultation relating to youth recreational activities that incorporate illicit drug education.

Resources and publications

General information about illicit drugs (distributed through schools, universities, TAFE, night venues, youth centres, treatment centres, etc) and education material for teachers and schools, including teachers notes, fact sheets and posters.

Referral and support

Campaign materials directed callers to either the Alcohol and Drug Information Service or Parent Drug Information Service phone lines for more information.

Regional strategy

This strategy was designed to encourage participation and collaboration from rural community groups. Kits were produced and distributed to Community Drug Service Teams, Local Drug Action Groups, Youth Advisory Councils and Public Health Units to assist them in supporting the campaign.

Sponsorship competition

Xpress Magazine (street press) coordinated a competition targeting young people to answer questions relating to the campaign advertisements. Over one thousand entries were received in return for five prize packs (including a double pass to the Big Day Out, two CDs and two movie passes donated by Xpress). This strategy was designed to increase awareness of the Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign and to increase the awareness of the harms associated with use of these drugs. The competition and advertisements also appeared on the Xpress website.

Merchandise

Merchandise was produced in consultation with young people to support campaign educational activities, sponsorship activities and regional strategies supporting the campaign. The merchandise was branded with the Drug Aware logo.

Evaluation

The key results from the formal post-campaign evaluation among 14 to 24-year olds found that¹⁴:

- 76% were aware of the campaign or recognised at least one advertisement. This is high given the amount and type of media used.
- 90% of psychostimulant users interviewed were aware of the campaign.
- four out of five people correctly identified messages from the radio advertising.
- half recalled correct messages from the press advertisements that focused on consequences of drug use, while 86% correctly identified the advertisement focusing on drug content.
- one in four and one in five young people reported that they now found each of the drugs less appealing.
- one in three young people reported that they now expected the type of experience as a result of psychostimulant use to be worse than previously expected.
- the campaign appeared to have a greater effect on beliefs about the potential health effects, with over 40% of respondents reporting they that they now believed each of the three drugs to be more harmful to their health than they had prior to the campaign.
- 81% approved of the government conducting this type of campaign.

Conclusion

The Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign has been a success in Western Australia. Involving young people closely in the Drug Aware Psychostimulants Campaign both in a formal and informal manner allowed the complex and difficult issues associated with 'party drugs' to be incorporated both believably and accurately into an effective and comprehensive campaign. The success of this campaign emphasises the importance of involving the target group at early stages of campaign or program development.

Campaign Recommendations

Be comprehensive

Campaigns should not only be thought of as existing of media alone. Media should be only one component of a broad range of strategies developed in close consultation with the target group.

Involve the target group

Closely involving the target in the early planning and development stages generates ownership of the strategies and increases their involvement in strategy implementation, this results in higher and longer –term adoption of the strategies allowing sustainability.

Keep messages credible and salient

It was only through close consultation with the target group (both formally and informally) that credible and salient messages were developed addressing the harms associated with 'party drugs' use. Findings relating to the development of campaign messages indicated that medical terminology and longer-term effects associated with drug use were more likely to be viewed seriously by the target group, as the shorter term effects associated with 'party drug' use were not viewed as being serious enough by young people.

Pre-test strategies:

It is better to spend the time and money pre-testing strategies rather than waiting to evaluate at the end just to discover that they didn't work.

Ask the target group what they think about the strategies: It is valuable to take the time to get out with the target group and see what they think about campaign strategies. Alternatively access people who do associate with the target group regularly and who have built a rapport with them and have them find out what the target group thinks. This valuable information can assist in refining campaign strategies at minimal cost.

Sources

Western Australian Task Force on Drug Abuse.

Protecting the community: the report of the Task Force on Drug Abuse. Perth, Minister of Premier & Cabinet, 1995.

Unwin E, Codde J.

Comparison of death due to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Western Australia. Perth: Health Information Centre Health Department of Western Australia and Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office, 1998.

Unwin E, Codde J, Swenson G.

Hospitalisation due to drugs other than tobacco or alcohol in Western Australia, 1991-1995. Perth: Health Information Centre Health Department of Western Australia and Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office, 1997.

Collins D, Lapsley H.

The social costs of drug abuse in Australia in 1988 and 1992. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health, 1996.

Health Promotion Services.

Developing an effective public education program on illicit drugs. Perth: report prepared by Report Market Equity, 1996.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

1998 National Drug Strategy Household Survey – Western Australian Results. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1999.

Public Health Division, Health Department of Western Australia.

Illicit and illicit drug use among 12-17-year-old Western Australian school students in 1996. Perth: Development and Support Branch, Public Health Division, Health Department of Western Australia, 1998.

Boys A, Lenton S and Norcross K.

Polydrug use at raves by a Western Australian sample. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 16, 227 – 234, 1997.

Health Promotion Services.

I guess if it was there and someone offered me it I'd probably take it. Perth: Health Promotion Services, Health Department of Western Australia, 1996.

Donovan Research.

Preliminary Qualitative Research To Assist In The Development Of The Rave And Concert Venues Project. Report to Health Department of Western Australia, 1997.

Legislative Assembly Western Australia.

Select Committee into the Misuse of Drug Act 1981: Final Report. Perth: State Law Publisher, 1998.

Government of Western Australia.

Together Against Drugs: The WA Strategy Against Drug abuse Action Plan 1999-2001. Government of Western Australia, 1999.

Donovan Research.

Drug Aware Campaign Evaluation. Report to Health Department of Western Australia, 1997.

Donovan Research.

Ad-test Evaluation of the 2000 Psychostimulants Campaign. Report to the Health Department of Western Australia, 1999.

Donovan Research.

Evaluation of the 2000 Psychostimulants Campaign. Report to the Health Department of Western Australia, 2000.

Public Health Division, Health Department of Western Australia.

Illicit Drug Use by Western Australian Adult in 1997. Perth: Development and Support Branch, Public Health Division, Health Department of Western Australia, 1998.

Drug Aware Program

Background

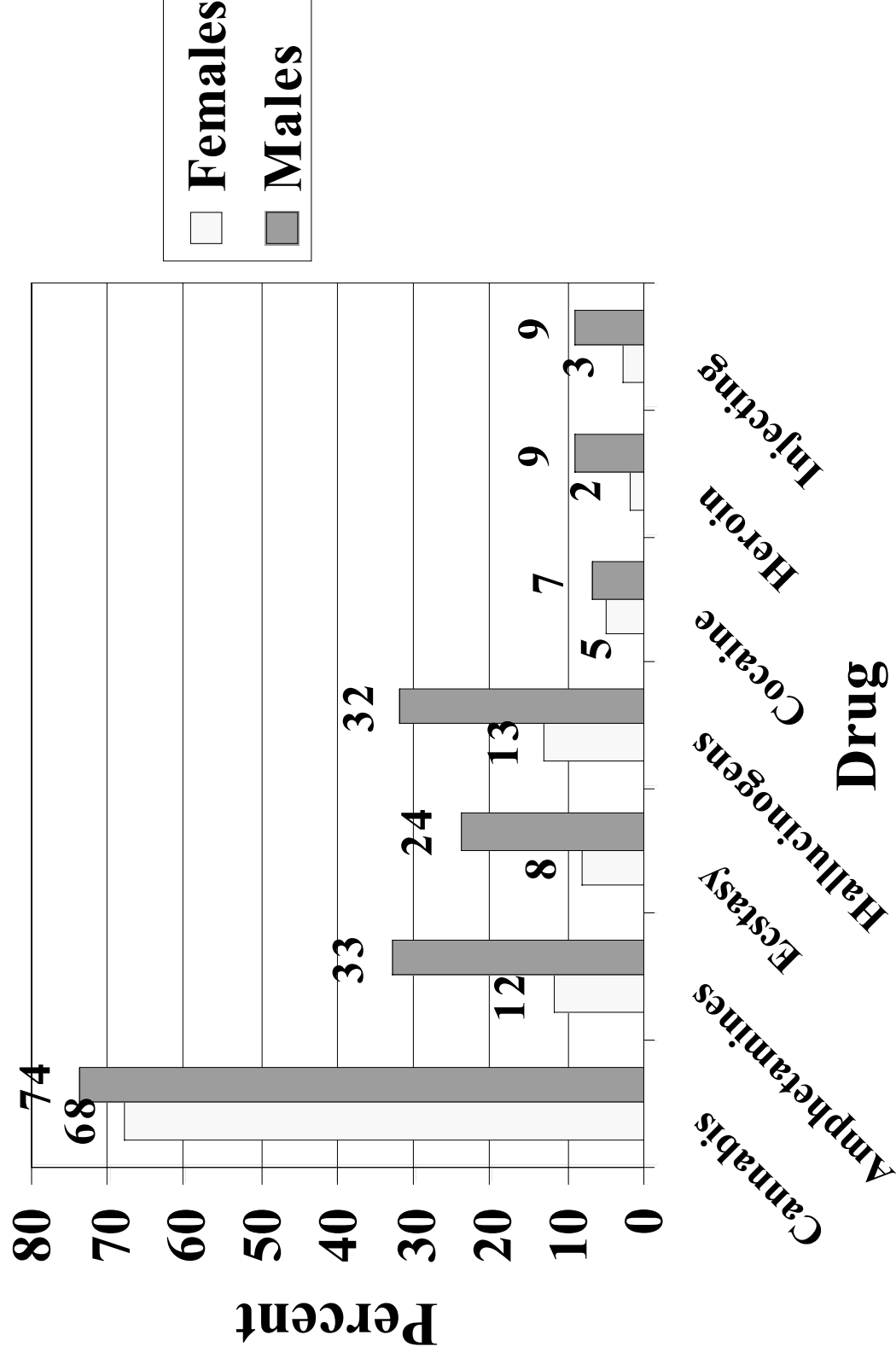
The public education program's aim is to prevent or delay the onset of use and reduce the harm associated with illicit drug use by:

- decreasing the attractiveness of drug use among young people;
- decreasing young people's intentions or their likelihood of trialing/using illicit drugs; and
- increasing effective communication between parents and young people about drug use issues.

Psychostimulants

- Dexamphetamines and Amphetamines
- Ecstasy
- Cocaine
- Hallucinogens

Proportion of males and females aged 18-34 years who have ever used drugs in WA, 1998



Consultation

- Young People
 - focus groups (user/non-user)
 - youth reference groups
 - ad testing (quantitative/qualitative)
- Community Drug Service Teams
- Local Drug Action Groups
- Alcohol and Drug Information Service
- Public Health Units

Comprehensive Approach

Target the issue broadly to educate the public and ensure the support is there to assist change:

- Mass Media Campaign - public education
- Youth Illicit Drug Education Project
- Schools Drug Education Project
- Tertiary Project
- Night Venues Project
- Alcohol and Drug Information Service
- Community Drug Service Team

Media Strategies

♣press

♣radio

♣convenience advertising

Messages

- **LSD Consequences Advertisement**

'OF COURSE SOME ADVERTISING IS MISLEADING'

- **Ecstasy Consequences Advertisement**

'HER BODY IS DANGEROUSLY OVERHEATED. BUT, ON ECSTASY, SARAH THINKS SHE'S COOL.'

Messages

- **Speed Consequences Advertisement**

'BEFORE YOU THINK ABOUT USING SPEED, ASK YOURSELF WHERE YOU WANT TO GO IN SUCH A HURRY'

- **Content Advertisement - Ecstasy**

'PICK WHICH ONE OF THESE IS ECSTASY. (THE OTHER IS A COCKTAIL OF CAFFEINE, SMACK AND INSECTICIDE)'

Support Strategies

- ♣ publication support consisting of information factsheets, mini information cards, posters and community support kits;
- ♣ referral to services;
- ♣ school, tertiary and night venue community support strategies (both metropolitan and regional);
- ♣ sponsorship activities; and
- ♣ merchandise.

Evaluation

- 76% of young people were aware of the campaign;
- 69% and 85% found the advertising credible and believable;
- 34% said they were less inclined to use them;
- 35% expected a worse experience with these drugs; and
- 40% believed each of these drugs to be more harmful to their health than they had prior to the campaign.

Conclusions

- The success of this campaign emphasises the importance of involving the target group at early stages of campaign or program development.

Psychostimulant Campaign Recommendations

- 1 Be comprehensive
- 2 Involve the target group
- 3 Keep the message salient and credible
- 4 Pre-test strategies
- 5 Ask the target group what they think about the strategies.