



Putting People First

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy

2002 – 2005

DRUG AND ALCOHOL OFFICE

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Foreword by the Premier of Western Australia

Legal and illicit drug use affect the entire community and have significant health, social and economic impacts on all West Australians. The State Government is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and communities and therefore to reducing the impact of drug and alcohol use in Western Australia.

The WA Community Drug Summit was held in August 2001 and a key outcome was the Government's commitment to 'Putting People First' as the basis for the development of the new Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy.

The Summit indicated the need for a comprehensive and coordinated response to drug use that involves all layers of Government in partnership with non-Government agencies and the community. The Departments of Justice, Health, Education, Community Development and the WA Police Service each have a major contribution to make to prevent and reduce the extent of drug related harm in our community. Each of these agencies will collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders in designing and implementing responses that are appropriate to the needs of the Western Australian community.

This process will be greatly enhanced by the establishment of the Community Advisory Council, which will act as a key source of community advice to the new Drug and Alcohol Office and Government.

The Government will:

- promote health enhancing lifestyles and communities;
- support strategies that prevent the uptake of harmful drug use;
- reduce the harm for all those affected by drug use, including individuals and communities; and
- disrupt the production and supply of illicit drugs.

The Government will do so by:

- building quality individual and community lifestyles;
- promoting connectedness to schools, families and communities;
- coordinating and integrating service delivery;
- using tax payers' money effectively and efficiently;
- providing additional services for those individuals and communities who have been poorly served in the past;
- adopting a flexible approach, responding to new opportunities and new challenges; and
- supporting effective responses and exploring innovative approaches.

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy is presented as a framework for all key stakeholders to develop effective action plans. By Putting People First, and working collaboratively, we will contribute to the health and well-being of all Western Australians.



Premier



Minister for Health

Contents

Putting People First	3
New Directions for Western Australia	8
Priority Areas for Action	10
<i>Prevention and Early Intervention</i>	10
<i>Support and Treatment</i>	11
<i>Law, Justice and Enforcement</i>	13
Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation	15
Key Supporting Documents	18

NOTE: *The World Health Organisation defined drugs as all substances, both legal and illegal, which when administered produce a change in biological function and possibly structure. This includes for example, prescription drugs and volatile substances as well as alcohol and illicit drugs.*

TOBACCO: *Tobacco use and related problems are not addressed in the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy. The strategic plan for addressing tobacco issues in Western Australia over the next four years is titled the "Western Australian Tobacco Action Plan 2001-2004, Taking the Lead". It provides an action plan for implementing key recommendations of the National Tobacco Strategy and will set public health policy on tobacco control for Western Australia.*

What Does Putting People First Mean ?

IN RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY DRUG SUMMIT THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

PEOPLE WILL BE AT THE CENTRE OF OUR RESPONSE TO DRUGS

SERVICES WILL BE IMPROVED

A COMPREHENSIVE, WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The State Government was elected on a platform of ensuring that drug related problems are treated primarily as social and health issues as opposed to an emphasis on the law enforcement approach. The Government is committed to 'Putting People First'.

In practice this means the Government will:

- put people and their needs at the centre of our planning and responses;
- put people's lives before political ideology;
- provide the necessary supports to assist all Western Australians to fully participate in our community;
- recognise the diversity of the Western Australian community;
- ensure that people are well informed about drug related issues, services and programs;
- disrupt illicit drug supply and target those who benefit from the manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs; and
- address new challenges in a pragmatic way.

If people do get into difficulty with drug use, we will help them by providing easy access to better services that are focused on their needs.

Current services will be improved. Putting People First means high needs groups such as children and young people, families, Indigenous people, regional, rural and remote communities and people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems will receive improved assistance. The Government will target these population groups through enhancing existing services and implementing a variety of new programs and services.

Government has stressed a renewed focus on collaboration and improved service delivery through the 'Delivering a Better Government' policy, which highlights the importance of a whole of Government approach to community problems.

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides direction for the combined efforts of the community, Government, and non-government organisations. It represents a quantum shift in both the way services are planned and organised, and in the manner of their delivery.

A RANGE OF INITIATIVES ARE REQUIRED, INCLUDING PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION, TREATMENT AND SUPPORT, AND LAW, JUSTICE AND ENFORCEMENT

The WA Community Drug Summit emphasised the need for:

- a greater focus on education, prevention and early intervention;
- greater community involvement;
- greater support for high needs groups;
- a change of focus from a predominantly criminal, justice emphasis to a more balanced health and social response; and
- recognising the importance of cultural security and family sensitive practice.

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy builds upon these priorities and reflects them through the values and principles that underpin its delivery (see below).

The Summit also identified the unmet needs of a number of groups in our community who require targeted attention. These groups are:

WE MUST TARGET GROUPS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- children and young people;
- families;
- Indigenous people and communities;
- people from regional, rural and remote communities; and
- people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems.

The needs of these groups have been targeted through the response of Government to the Community Drug Summit and the provision of additional resources. \$5 million per annum has been allocated to address the needs of these groups.

CHANGE WILL BE FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY NEEDS

This additional investment is just the beginning of the People First approach. The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy also anticipates the realignment of existing resources. The focus of change will be to better meet the needs of the people and the communities we serve.

Children and Young People

Addressing the needs of children and young people affected by drugs and alcohol is an important priority. These vulnerable children may be drug users themselves or experience family conflict and breakdown because of drug use by parents, siblings or other family members.

CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
NEED OUR
COMPLETE CARE

Some of the particular drug issues facing children and young people include problems relating to alcohol intoxication, volatile substances, cannabis and amphetamines.

Parental drug use sometimes results in other family members assuming care for their children or the need for alternative care. Conflict between parents and a sibling using drugs can also lead to family breakdown.

Holistic Government and community responses to the impact of drug use must address issues such as youth homelessness, sexual abuse and neglect, mental illness, conflict with parents and other factors.

To address these issues, Government will:

PREVENT CHILDREN
OF PARENTS WITH
DRUG RELATED
PROBLEMS
ENTERING CARE

- develop preventive and early intervention strategies linked with other initiatives across Government;
- establish a children's and young people's Drug and Alcohol program;
- develop family focused strategies to assist parents with drug problems, who have young children, to address their drug use and strengthen parenting skills, to prevent their children entering care;
- use models of outreach, targeted prevention and harm reduction to better meet the needs of children and young people;
- develop mainstream agency responses to children and young people's drug use through models of practice development and shared care;
- target specific drugs as patterns and trends of use change; and
- increase targeted drug education and awareness raising for children and young people.

Families

THE IMPORTANCE
OF 'FAMILY' WILL BE
REINFORCED

Families face a unique set of needs and challenges. New and emerging models of family sensitive practice actively involve families in program design and development. Government will:

- ensure family sensitive practice in all drug agencies; and

- continue to raise awareness and responsiveness of non-government organisations and government agencies, to the complex needs of families.

Indigenous People and Communities

MEETING
INDIGENOUS NEEDS
WILL BE A PRIORITY

Drug use and related harm among Indigenous people is a growing and significant concern. Particular drugs of significance include alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines and volatile substances. Drug use is intertwined with broader social issues including continuing oppression from colonisation, family violence, and broad ranging social disadvantage. In addressing Indigenous issues, Government will:

- make cultural security central to agency and non-government organisations' response;
- enable self-determination through the principles outlined in the *Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians*; and
- prioritise prevention and early intervention strategies.

People from Regional, Rural and Remote Communities

NO MATTER WHERE
WE LIVE, WE
DESERVE EQUITY

The Summit noted that regional, rural and remote communities face particular challenges related to drug use for a broad range of reasons. Government will:

- prioritise resource allocation to regional, rural and remote areas; and
- allow greater flexibility in the use of existing resources to meet local need.

People with Co-occurring Mental Health and Drug Use Problems

CO-OCCURRING
MENTAL HEALTH
AND DRUG USE
PROBLEMS

People with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems have special needs. Incidence of this issue is growing and related problems are more complex than experienced in the past.

In addressing this issue, Government will:

- develop a comprehensive approach to comorbidity via the 'Alcohol Drugs and Psychiatric Treatment' policy and program; and

- develop specific strategies targeting amphetamine use.

The Vision

For Western Australians to lead healthy lifestyles and to have access to the best services and programs to prevent and reduce drug related harm.

Aims

The overall aims of the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy are to:

- promote healthy lifestyles and communities;
- promote connectedness to schools, families and communities;
- involve Western Australians in developing appropriate responses to drug issues in the community;
- reduce the level of illness, injury and death associated with drug use in Western Australia;
- reduce the level of drug related crime committed in Western Australia; and
- reduce the level of social disruption and loss of productivity associated with drug use in Western Australia.

Values

The Western Australian Government's approach is underpinned by the following values:

Inclusiveness

Forming partnerships to engage and involve the whole community in drug policy and strategy.

Compassion and Understanding

Each person has a right to compassionate care and to be treated with dignity, free from harassment and discrimination.

Equity

Each person has equal worth and basic rights regardless of differences in race, gender, age, ability, religious belief, political affiliation, cultural outlook, national origin, sexual orientation, citizenship or geographical location.

Cultural security

Cultural security is a commitment to the legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of Indigenous people. It requires programs and services to provide equal quality and outcomes irrespective of cultural background.

Principles

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- access and equity;
- integration and coordination of services;
- responsiveness to individual, family and community needs;
- evidence based practice;
- cost effectiveness; and
- a flexible and pragmatic approach.

Priority Areas for Action

SEEKING
REALISTIC AND
SUSTAINABLE,
CHANGE AND
SOLUTIONS
THROUGH A
PRAGMATIC
APPROACH

Consistent with the directions of the National Drug Strategy, the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy embraces the concept of harm minimisation, encompassing the core functions of supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction.

Based on the National Framework and the WA Community Drug Summit, Prevention and Early Intervention, Treatment and Support, and Law, Justice and Enforcement are the priorities of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy.

Prevention and Early Intervention

SUPPORTING
HEALTHY
LIFESTYLES AND
COMMUNITIES
AND PREVENTING
DRUG RELATED
PROBLEMS

Prevention is fundamental to the 'People First' approach and involves developing ways to support individuals, families and communities to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to adopt healthy behaviours and lifestyles.

The companion document, 'Model for Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Early Intervention', establishes the framework for a comprehensive view of prevention, based around the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion.

Reflective of Drug Summit recommendations, important new directions emphasised in the model include early childhood intervention, mechanisms for community inclusion, and a greater integration of the full resources of Government in prevention.

PREVENTION
STRATEGIES
WILL BE
EXPANDED

Government will facilitate the adoption of a comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention involving all relevant agencies and non-government organisations aiming to:

- contribute to the reduction of risk factors and the development of protective factors relating to problems associated with drug use, in local communities;
- support physical, cultural and social environments that discourage problematic drug use;
- develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the community, children and young people, and adults to avoid drug related problems;

- prevent and/or delay the onset of illicit drug use, and the hazardous use of other drugs; and
- involve local communities, including children and young people, families, workplaces, schools, community groups and others, in strategies to prevent drug related problems.

In addition to state-wide programs and strategies, specific local initiatives will be incorporated in Area Drug and Alcohol Plans.

Support and Treatment

TREATMENT AND
SUPPORT WILL BE
READILY
ACCESSIBLE TO
THOSE IN NEED

A comprehensive range of early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation services for people affected by drug use, including families, is required. These will have strong links to mainstream health and community development systems. The services will be family sensitive and will ensure continuity of care, and strengthen the ability to attract and retain drug users in treatment early in the course of problematic drug use.

The companion document 'Model for Treatment and Support Services' describes the development of treatment services targeted to community needs. Treatment services will be developed to provide a comprehensive range of treatment options for people. This includes greater linkages across agencies and with the general health system, home based withdrawal, residential care, and pharmacotherapy services. Identified groups with unmet needs, including children and young people, families, Indigenous people, people from regional, rural and remote communities and people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems, will be a priority for services.

Initiatives will aim to:

- ensure that there is a comprehensive range of community-oriented, evidence-based treatment and support services, responsive to client needs, throughout the State;
- improve access to services to meet the particular needs of children and young people, families, Indigenous communities, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems, and people in regional, rural and remote communities;

COMMUNITY
NEEDS WILL BE
THE PRIORITY

- promote clear points of entry into treatment and ensure that there are identified pathways for people to access the services most appropriate to their needs;
- ensure that services operate as an integrated network, reflecting continuity with the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy's underlying values and principles. This is a particular priority for those providing medical interventions and those providing broader counselling interventions. These services must be effectively integrated with the general health system;
- ensure that there are effective linkages between non-government organisations, and agencies that respond to people affected by drugs (eg drug services, health, youth, community development, justice, police, housing, training, education and employment services) and with local communities; and
- monitor service standards and performance. In order to ensure effective service monitoring, a standardised treatment service database and information system will be developed. Key service requirements and common standards for all treatment services and client outcomes will be developed and monitored across the service system.

Area Drug and Alcohol Plans will enhance the development of existing and planned services to meet community need.

LOCAL PLANS
WILL INFORM
LOCAL ACTION

Effective treatment and support services, include linkages with the WA Police Service, Departments of Justice, Education, Community Development, Housing, Training and others. Each of these departments will develop action plans which articulate their role in a comprehensive drug treatment response.

A WHOLE OF
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE

Law, Justice and Enforcement

The People First approach also entails appropriate *legal responses* to drug use. The way in which we both develop and enforce laws has a significant impact on drug related outcomes. Drug law reform, which can minimise negative impacts while ensuring the dangers of drugs are also addressed, will be a continuing priority of Government. This also includes appropriate education for the community in understanding resultant changes.

DISRUPT AND
REDUCE THE
SUPPLY OF ILLICIT
DRUGS, REDUCE
THE ILLEGAL
SUPPLY OF
ALCOHOL

MAXIMISE THE
IMPACT OF
DIVERSION
PROGRAMS

Law enforcement initiatives will aim to:

- link with prevention by exploring collaborative models;
- link to treatment by maximising the number of offenders with drug problems engaged in diversion programs at each stage of the criminal justice system;
- reduce the supply of illicit drugs and the illegal supply of alcohol; and
- enact a legal framework that achieves a balance between strongly discouraging and penalising the illicit drug trade, encouraging people to recover from drug problems and avoiding undue legal penalties for people who use drugs.

The criminal justice and correctional systems recognise that the relationship between offenders' use of drugs and crime is multi dimensional, and while offending behaviour and drug use are highly correlated, the relationship between these behaviours is not causal.

Justice and correctional system initiatives will aim to:

REDUCE HARM
ASSOCIATED WITH
DRUG USE

- treat people affected by drugs for their drug use with compassion and respect, within the context of their offending behaviour;
- reduce drug use and associated problems by offenders and others identified in the justice system; and
- reduce re-offending associated with drug use.

Future law, justice and enforcement directions are encompassed in both the 'Treatment and Support' and 'Prevention and Early Intervention' models. Key actions anticipated in these models include continuing drug law reform, increased diversion to treatment, and an increased focus on prevention.

Implementation

AREA DRUG AND ALCOHOL PLANS WILL BE DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL KEY STAKEHOLDERS

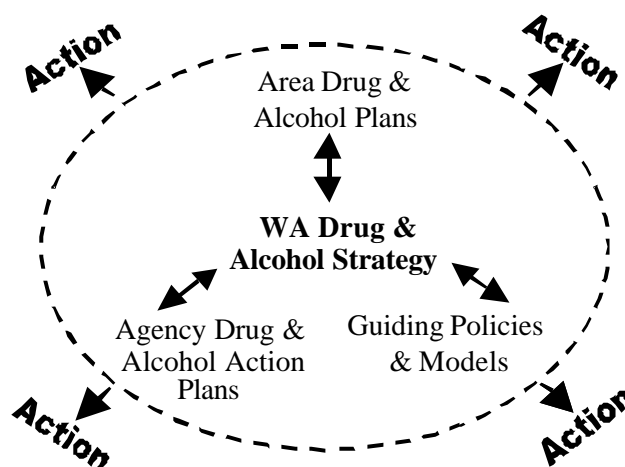
A CONTINUING PRIORITY IS PROVIDING THE COMMUNITY WITH A VOICE ON DRUG POLICY

RESOURCES WILL BE USED EFFECTIVELY TO DELIVER THE BEST OUTCOMES

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides the basis for the development of various Action Plans for local communities, government agencies and in response to specific drugs.

The Drug and Alcohol Office will facilitate the development of *Area Drug and Alcohol Plans* in geographically based communities.

In parallel, the Drug and Alcohol Office will work with agencies in the development of *Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans*. The Drug and Alcohol Office will also develop its own Agency Action Plan/s as appropriate. Additional resources will then be considered in the context of both Area and Agency based Action Plans.



Area Drug and Alcohol Plans

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy anticipates that this approach is best achieved at the local level, and so change will be spearheaded by the development of Area Drug and Alcohol Plans.

These plans will articulate the needs of geographically defined communities, and service providers will be empowered to change practice to meet these local needs.

Area Drug and Alcohol Plans will provide a framework for developing local action to meet local need. Drawing on the available evidence, local issues will be identified and strategies developed in response.

Each Area Drug and Alcohol Plan will involve all relevant stakeholders and will be a living document that embraces innovation and flexibility to meet ever changing patterns of drug use and related harm.

The Drug and Alcohol Office will enable non-government organisations to modify practice to meet identified need, and will prioritise funding allocations to identified need. Other relevant community funding bodies will be actively engaged and encouraged to utilise the plans to inform allocative decision making.

Area Drug and Alcohol Plans will articulate action at a local level, and within the parameters of this Strategy, action is expected to vary from area to area. The purpose of each Area Drug and Alcohol Plan is to target resources and response to localised need. The processes employed will be mindful of other planning processes where they exist and will be flexible to link with new planning models as they emerge.

Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans

AGENCY ACTION
PLANS WILL
SPEARHEAD A
WHOLE OF
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE

The Action Plans will:

- reflect the vision, aims and priorities of the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy;
- reflect the mechanisms for delivery of Area Drug and Alcohol Plans where relevant;
- specify target populations for each activity/program;
- specify responsibilities and timelines for each activity; and
- link to, and be consistent with other relevant and related strategies in the Department's of Health, Justice, Community Development, Education, Indigenous Affairs and the WA Police Service.

Evaluation and Performance Monitoring

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy will aim to ensure that resources are used effectively to deliver the best possible outcomes to the community. Performance indicators linked to all areas of activity across Government will be collected and reported on annually.

In addition to effective monitoring, resources will be allocated for periodic evaluation of funded services and programs.

The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy outlines how the community, government agencies, and non-government organisations can work together to enhance the quality of life for all Western Australians by 'Putting People First'.

Key Supporting Documents

Community Drug Summit Recommendations. The Government's Response: 'Putting People First' November, 2001.

(www.wa.gov.au/drugwestaus/)

National Alcohol Strategy: A plan for action 2001 to 2003-04, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra.

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Model for Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Early Intervention Services (2002), Drug and Alcohol Office.

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