Putting People First

AGENCY DRUG AND ALCOHOL ACTION PLAN

**DEPARTMENT OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

2003 - 2005

Foreword

The Government of Western Australia has clearly articulated its strategic vision as the creation of a growing and diversified economy with strong and vibrant regions and safe, healthy and supportive communities.

In assisting the Government to achieve its vision, the emphasis of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development is on developing and implementing policies and strategies to improve the provision of services to regional communities to further their economic and social development. This includes assisting in the coordination of the delivery of government services to regional areas and ensuring that all communities throughout the State receive good governance.

While the Department does not have a direct service role with respect to alcohol and drug matters, through its broader role and the initiatives outlined in this Action Plan it will support the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy, working closely with the Drug and Alcohol Office, communities and stakeholders.

Cheryl Gwilliam
Director General

    May 2003

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Executive Summary

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> "An increased capacity of communities to develop good governance, economic growth and social well – being".

The Department has four guiding principles to help achieve this vision, these being:

- to practice good communication and collaboration with clients and stakeholders;
- to provide quality advice;
- to develop quality services and products; and
- to foster balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental issues.

AGENCY OBJECTIVES

The Department has three main objectives:

Implementation of Government Policy

Objective: To ensure that the Minister and the Government are provided with quality information and support.

Improved access to services and capacity for development in regional communities

Objective:

To enhance social and economic development of communities through the provision of assistance, funding and leadership.

Better local government

Objective:

Through advice, support and compliance monitoring, assist local governments to be more efficient and effective and to achieve good governance and be responsive to community needs.

[1]The Department of Local Government and Regional Development does not have a direct role in relation to drug and alcohol matters.

However, it will support initiatives and programs in the following ways:

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Prevention and Early Intervention

- the implementation and monitoring of progress with relevant aspects of the State Government's Draft Regional Policy Statement;
- continued contribution through future Director General and Officer forums to State Government social policy strategies, including Early Years and Gordon Implementation;
- facilitation of training and information sessions through the Telecentre Support Service and Westlink satellite services;
- support for community leadership through the Western Australian Community Leadership Plan and the Community Leadership Program Initiative;
- implementation of the Department's Indigenous Strategic Approach with respect to Indigenous people and communities;
- work with the Drug and Alcohol Office, local governments and others, encouraging local government involvement in local area planning in relation to drug and alcohol matters and the incorporation of relevant initiatives in their principal activity plans, in conjunction with other social planning processes;
- work with the Drug and Alcohol Office, the liquor licensing authority, local governments and others, giving consideration to the development of policy guidelines with respect to liquor licensing and encouraging community input to the guidelines and to liquor licensing decisions;
- work with the Drug and Alcohol Office, the Department of Health, the Department of the Environment, local government and others, giving consideration to the development of guidelines relating to needle and syringe disposal; and
- support for strategies to attract and retain general practitioners, specialists and other health professionals to non-metropolitan areas, as incorporated in the Draft Regional Policy Statement and through contribution to the Standing Committee on Regional Development working party which is looking at the attraction of professionals to regional Australia.

Treatment and Support Services

The Department will facilitate the use of relevant Departmental programs and initiatives to support the provision of treatment and support services. These programs and initiatives include:

- the Collocation program which supports the location of a range of services in one facility, thus enhancing the sharing of resources and the possibility of greater coordination of services. Remote and regional locations are being considered under the program; and
- the Telecentre Support service, including video links, and the Westlink satellite service. These could be used for diagnosis, treatment and general support services which can be offered through these mediums.

Law, Justice and Enforcement

In this area, the Department will:

- facilitate the use of Departmental services such as the Telecentre Support and Westlink satellite services for this purpose; and

- support the development and capacity of communities through it's capacity building initiatives, including community leadership, work with Indigenous people and communities and the promotion of good governance through local governments.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The development of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development drug and alcohol plan represents a significant step towards a more integrated response to drug and alcohol issues in this state. A Key State Government commitment to 'Deliver a Better Government' has underpinned the implementation of more cohesive and integrated Government policy, enabling greater coordination and integration of services. This commitment has also been embraced by the Western Australian community through the WA Community Drug Summit, which has demanded more than a 'siloed' response from Government.

The response to the Summit, called 'Putting People First', reflected an ideological shift in responding to drug and alcohol related problems by primarily treating them as a health and social issue, rather than a criminal or justice issue. Furthermore, Government recognised the importance of a more seamless system of care for those in need, and a more coordinated response from the many agencies and individuals involved. This approach was spearheaded by the development of *'Putting People First' The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy, 2002 - 2005.*

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides a framework for all key stakeholders. It builds on the priorities of the WA Community Drug Summit, and provides a clear commitment to target attention towards the unmet needs of a number of priority groups in our community, namely 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 approach outlined in the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy is hinged on pragmatism and is consistent with the directions of the National Drug Strategy. The priority areas for action, which are based on the National Framework and the WA Community Drug Summit, include Prevention and Early Intervention, Treatment and Support, and Law, Justice and Enforcement.

Two key features of this new approach are the development of both *Agency* Drug and Alcohol Action Plans, and *Area* Drug and Alcohol Plans. Agency plans provide the basis for development of specific agency and sectorial contribution to drug response, for the first time clearly outlining the contribution and directions of key Government Departments in overall drug and alcohol strategy. Area Planning is both an important process of community engagement, and a means of targeting action to local need. While Area Plans are necessarily broader in scope than the activities of Government, the resultant documents should support and complement each other, and therefore should be read in parallel. Put simply, Agency Plans provide, a basis and mechanism for Area Plans through 'top-down' support of

the central authority, and Area Plans provide a vehicle for Agency action at the local level.

LINKS TO BROAD SOCIAL POLICY

The impact of drug and alcohol use on the human service sector is well documented. The police and justice sectors have reported figures that up to 80% of their work is drug and alcohol related. The welfare sector reports that up to 70% of child maltreatment allegations, around 50% of marital breakdown, and a high proportion of financial assistance is associated with drug and alcohol use. The health sector reports that up to 30% of hospital admissions, and up to two-thirds of mental health conditions are also closely associated with drug and alcohol use. Clearly, all human sector agencies have an investment in ensuring effective responses to drug and alcohol harm.

Yet drug and alcohol use and associated harms do not occur in isolation. New research clearly shows that drug and alcohol-related risk and harm share common causal pathways with a range of other social problems, including crime, welfare dependency, physical and mental ill-health, and even school and work performance and participation. Drug and alcohol use and related harm is but one part of the complexity of the human condition, not the root cause of all social ills. But when present, drug and alcohol use problems can exacerbate and complicate these other issues, such that an effective and combined response to drug use becomes essential, and can achieve solid improvements and gains. Drug use treatment and prevention has been shown to achieve up to a $7 return on every $1 invested.

Drug and alcohol issues affect the entire community and have significant health, social and economic impacts on all West Australians. The annual cost of alcohol and other drugs to the Australian community has been estimated for 1998/99 at $34.4 billion (includes tobacco at a total cost of $21.1 billion) by Collins and Lapsley[2].

The need now is to develop cross-sectoral responses that can capture the depth of people and their needs.

This is illustrated by a number of recent Government inquiries into serious health, social and economic problems in Western Australia that have all identified common themes. The inquiries and major themes include:

1. The State Government 'Response to the findings of the Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities' (Gordon Inquiry):
   - *Significantly the Report found that violence and child abuse are grave social problems that are endemic in many Aboriginal communities.*

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[2] Collins, D., & Lapsley, H. (2003). *New estimates of the social costs of drug abuse in Australia*. Paper presented to the *International Research Symposium – Preventing substance use, risky use and harm: What is evidence-based policy?* National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Fremantle 24-27 February, 2003.

- *The report recommended the need to shift from planning within individual agencies to planning that is sector wide and responds to each community's need for integrated service provision.*

2. The Government's Response to the Report of the Homelessness Taskforce 'Putting People First' May 2002:
   - *The combined resources of the social sector, together with the continuing input of the community, are essential in tackling this social issue.*
   - *The social, economic and health issues associated with the risk of being homeless include, but are not limited to; family conflict, mental illness, family violence, and problematic alcohol and other drug use.*

3. The Early Years Taskforce: The Government established the Early Years Taskforce to develop an 'early years strategy' aimed at improving the wellbeing of young children aged 0-8:
   - *The Strategy is to be based on strong cooperation between State and Local Government service agencies and non-government service providers and a high degree of consultation and engagement with local communities.*
   - *In keeping with the social determinants model, the Early Years Strategy aims to improve outcomes for children.*

LINKS TO AREA DRUG AND ALCOHOL PLANS

The Area Drug and Alcohol Plans emphasise the importance of the regional focus which underpins the role and work of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development.

AGENCY CONTEXT

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Department has as its principal outcome "Enhancing the development and capacity of communities through good governance, economic growth and social well-being". In achieving this outcome, its major activities relate to:

- providing support and advice to help build stronger communities;
- working with local governments to achieve the standards required by legislation;
- providing assistance, including funding, to enhance the development of regions and local governments;
- implementing effective legislation in relevant areas and supporting its operation;
- supporting individual and community capacity building, with particular emphasis on leadership and governance;
- encouraging devolution of decision making and service delivery to regional and local levels; and
- working towards equity of access to services across Western Australia.

These activities are carried out within the context of the broader State Government policy objectives and framework which includes a focus on community development and support; a whole of government approach to policy, planning and budgeting of initiatives (eg the Early Years Strategy and the Government's response to the Gordon Inquiry); joint approaches to service provision by agencies; and partnerships with the community. Broad initiatives such as those mentioned above are being implemented on a location basis and this approach is also being taken by the Department during 2003.

The Department plays a role, along with other agencies, including the Department for Community Development, in general community development/capacity building. It does not have a specific role with respect to drug and alcohol matters.

Relevant initiatives of the Department include the development of the Draft Regional Policy Statement for Western Australia; also Indicators of Regional Development in Western Australia; the Community Leadership Plan and Program Initiatives (incorporating a focus on Indigenous people and communities); the Department's Indigenous Strategic Approach initiatives; provision of funding through the Regional Investment Fund; supporting existing services and providing access to telecommunication facilities in additional centres around the State (including remote Indigenous communities), through the Telecentre Support Service; providing Westlink satellite services; supporting coordinated local and regional service provision through the Collocation program; and administering the RRR Network, established some years ago to provide a forum for rural, regional and remote women through the sharing and dissemination of information, including the use of online "chat" sessions.

In addition, the Western Australian Local Government Grants Commission, which makes recommendations to the State Minister for Local Government and Regional Development on the distribution of Commonwealth financial assistance grants to local governments in Western Australia is located within the Department. Once accepted by the State Minister, the recommendations of the Commission are referred to the Commonwealth Government for approval and payment.

The Department also works closely with Regional Development Commissions (RDC's) to further social, economic and environmental growth and development in the regions.

With respect to local governments, the Department provides information and advice to local governments in relation to legislation for which it has responsibility and which local governments administer. The Department also monitors the administration and operation of this legislation by local governments. The legislation includes the *Local Government Act 1995*. Under this Act, the general function of a local government is "to provide for the good government of persons in its district". This is broad in scope but there can be limitations on what a local government can do eg through requirements of legislation. Two of the objects of the Act are "greater public participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments" and "greater accountability of local governments to their communities", thus emphasising the essential link between a local government and the people in the community.

Within this context, local governments are to determine with their communities priorities and activities for four or more years, reviewing these each year. These will differ for each local government and community. The Department does not have a role in the determination of these (unless of course, there is concern that basic local government services are not being provided). However, it can and does encourage community participation in the process, in keeping with the objects of the Act.

At a State planning level, such as for this Strategy, the Department can provide information about the legislation which it administers and how it relates to local governments. However, as each local government is an autonomous corporate entity, the Department cannot make decisions or undertakings on its behalf. It can, though, encourage and facilitate partnerships and joint approaches with particular local governments, regional groupings of local governments and with the industry organisations, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) and Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA). Another avenue is the "State/Local Government Partnerships" agreement signed recently by the State Government, WALGA and LGMA.

AGENCY VISION

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BROAD POLICY DIRECTIONS

The Department's strategic direction involves local governments in a whole – of - government approach to the achievement of economic, social and environmental goals.

An important role also exists in the provision of information and support services to enhance the capacity of local governments, communities and organisations to influence the good governance and development within their districts.

Developing and enhancing local leadership skills and the capacity for local decision making is high on the Department's agenda to facilitate both social and economic regional development.

This includes fostering the concept of partnership with and between the many stakeholders to enable local leaders to maximise the potential benefits available from sharing resources, coordinating activities and providing mutual support.

The Department is keen to work closely with communities and stakeholders in forging its directions and goals.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

KEY STRATEGY AREA: **PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION**

Action Issue	Target Group/s	Action	Other key stakeholders	Area	Implementation Timeline
Draft Regional Policy Statement for Western Australia	All members of the community, government and non government agencies, the private sector	Comment on the Draft Regional Policy Statement has been received and approaches for implementation and the monitoring of progress of the strategies are being developed. This will include consideration of drug and alcohol aspects.	DAO Main service providers Community members	Statewide	In the process of further development and implementation.
Continued contribution to other State Government Social Policy Strategies		Participate in future Director General and Officer forums for social policy strategies, including Early Years and Gordon Implementation, as appropriate.	Government agencies; Non government organisations Community organisations and community members	Statewide and location based.	In the process of implementation.
Provision of information and training through	Community members Serv³ice providers	Possible initiatives to be discussed with DAO and relevant others.	Various, depending on the specific initiative.	May be Statewide or location based.	Not yet developed.

Telecentre Support service and Westlink satellite services					Being implemented.
Community Leadership Plan	Community leaders, including Indigenous leaders and people interested in becoming leaders in their community	Strategy teams to develop community leadership plans in the areas of networking, information, resources and research and evaluation are now in place.	Department of Family and Children's Services Regional Development Commissions Local governments Community organisations Individuals	.	
Leadership Program Initiatives	Community leaders, including Indigenous leaders and people interested in becoming leaders in their community	Applications from people nominated by their communities to participate in leadership programs in various locations across the State are now being considered. Programs are now being developed in more detail.	RDC's Local governments Community organisations Individuals		
Indigenous Strategic	Indigenous people and	Actions include the following: Indigenous Communities Development	Local governments		

Approach					
	communities	Officer is making contact with Indigenous communities and local governments to encourage joint planning and service arrangements; Support being provided to several local governments, in conjunction with local Indigenous groups and others to achieve mutual objectives.	Department of Indigenous Affairs ATSIC Policy Centre and Regional Councils RDC's Indigenous organisations		
Local Government involvement in local area planning	Local Governments Members of the community Service providers	Encourage local government involvement in local area planning in relation to drug and alcohol matters and the incorporation of relevant initiatives in their principal activity plans.		State wide or location based – to be considered	Concept not yet developed.
Local governments and liquor licensing	Local governments and members of community	Work with the Drug and Alcohol Office, the liquor licensing authority, local governments and others and consider the development of policy guidelines with respect to liquor licensing, encouraging community input to the guidelines and to liquor licensing decisions.	Local governments DAO Liquor licensing authority WALGA	Location based	Not yet developed.
Needle and syringe disposal	Various	Work with the Drug and Alcohol Office, the Department of Health, the Department of the Environment, local government and others, giving consideration to the development of guidelines relating to needle and syringe	DAO DOH DOE Local governments WALGA	Guidelines may need to have a metropolitan and also a regional	Concept not yet developed

		disposal.		focus	2003-2004
Attraction of general practitioners and other professional service providers to non metropolitan areas	General practitioners, other professional service providers, Government agencies, professional organisations, educational institutions	Develop strategies as part of implementation of the Draft Regional Policy Statement. Contribute to the Standing Committee on Regional Development (SCORD) working party.	As for target groups.	Statewide and national	2003-2004
Telecentre Support and Westlink satellite services; Collocation program	Members of the community	Ongoing service provision has the aim of enhancing the development and capacity of communities.	Range of other government and non government agencies and organisations, also private sector.	Statewide	

KEY STRATEGY AREA: **TREATMENT AND SUPPORT**

Action Issue	Target Group/s	Action	Other key stakeholders	Area	Implementation Timeline
Collocation of services and facilities	Government agencies	Support the location of a range of services in one facility, thus enhancing the sharing of resources and the possibility of greater coordination of services. Note: Remote and regional locations are being considered under the program.		Region	Ongoing
Service delivery by electronic means	Service providers Community members	Facilitate treatment and support through the use of the Telecentre Support service and local Telecentres, including video links, and the Westlink satellite service. These could be used for diagnosis, treatment and provision of general support services.		Statewide and by region or location.	Not yet developed.

KEY STRATEGY AREA: **LAW, JUSTICE AND ENFORCEMENT**

Action Issue	Target Group/s	Action	Other key stakeholders	Area	Implementation Timeline
Provision of communication facilities	Agencies Other service providers Community members	Facilitate the use of Departmental services such as the Telecentre Support and Westlink satellite services for this purpose.		Statewide, region, location based	Specific initiatives to be developed. Services are available.
Supporting the development and capacity of communities		Support the development and capacity of communities through capacity building initiatives, including community leadership, work with Indigenous people and communities and the promotion of good governance through local governments.		Dependent on the particular initiative.	Dependent on the initiative. Some are under way now, others will be developed and implemented over the nexr 2 to 3 years.

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

In undertaking the activities proposed in this Plan, the Department will identify emerging policy issues relevant to its role and functions and consider these further with members of the community, agencies and stakeholders.