

National Drug Strategy 2010 - 2015

Roundtable Consultation Synopsis Framework

Adelaide, 23 April 2010

Participants

The Adelaide roundtable was attended by 23 participants. A list of participants and the organisations they represent can be found at Attachment A.

Summary

The participants of the roundtable felt strongly that the purpose of the National Drug Strategy (NDS) be made clear and that the objectives are clarified in the new strategy. It was significant to note that many of the participants did not understand that the NDS is not a service delivery strategy but its purpose is to inform activities across the jurisdictions. There was general agreement that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and perspectives should be better addressed in the next NDS. While participants in general supported the need for the existence of a Complementary Action Plan (CAP), they were of the view that there needed to be stronger links between the CAP and the NDS, so as to bring a focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance misuse issues.

Participants indicated a need for a contemporary NDS to recognise the changing dynamics of society for example, increasing levels of disaffection, intergenerational patterns of drug use and for a broader framework around the social determinants of health including community safety and lifestyle. Participants noted that the current emphasis appears to be on illicit drugs when alcohol and tobacco account for the larger economic impact. There were also calls from participants that consideration be given to a communications strategy to promote the NDS and better engage with the broader community.

Participants noted a number of emerging issues related to the increasing abuse of prescription medicines, the challenges faced by the police and clinicians in managing people with a number of complex conditions, the ageing community and workforce, the use of information technology as a source of information about and access to drugs (illicit and licit), and the increasing levels of disaffection in society, that present challenges to all sectors involved in the NDS.

The workforce emerged as a key issue for all participants especially those from non government organisations. There was consensus on the need for a sub-strategy to address the industrial, educational, training and service standards of the people involve in service delivery across the sectors.

Policy Framework

The following statements were made by participants regarding the NDS and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Complementary Action Plan:

- The NDS needs to promote a community perspective on issues related to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.
- NDS and CAP should better focus government's funding efforts.
- Participants noted the pros and cons of maintaining a separate CAP and NDS. There were concerns that merging the documents may result in a dilution of issues, while maintaining two separate documents may result in marginalising the CAP.
- Participants sought clearer action and outcomes in the CAP and that it be monitored as part of NDS governance arrangements.

The following points were raised by participants in reference to the next NDS:

- The NDS should provide measurable trends and targets that are regularly reviewed.
- The NDS should explicitly reference its role in relation to smoking, binge drinking, education and the workforce.
- Increase the specificity of strategies within the NDS.
- The NDS to be explicit about the expectation and nature of proposed partnerships and how services could be integrated across the sectors.
- Broaden the representation at state and national levels to include those that have to implement the strategies including those that implement the alcohol licensing regulations.
- Strengthen the use of what we know (use the research) to address the harms.

Objectives

The participants recognised the challenge presented by the need for relevance and balance in the NDS across many different sectors and its need to engage at the national, state and local government levels. The needs of the rural and remote (indigenous and non-indigenous) communities compound this complexity. Participants noted this may be assisted by reducing and clarifying the objectives and consequent strategies and priorities. It was also suggested that a population health approach that focuses on the three pillars may assist in re-shaping the strategy.

The participants would like the NDS to recognise the following issues:

- The challenges and difficulties of remoteness and isolation, particularly the difficulties associated with servicing remote communities.
- The need to invest in improved data recording and collection to ensure the right data is available and it is used to inform policy and funding decisions.
- An emphasis on early intervention is important to reducing harmful behaviours.
- There is a need for cultural change in the community with respect to alcohol and drug use.
- There is a need to encourage innovation especially where the evidence is not clear.

Principles and Priorities

Participants noted that the NDS and sub strategies need to support planning for what happens on the ground by:

- Supporting the formation of holistic partnerships across sectors.
- Assisting schools to work with families and the community.
- Encouraging innovation especially where the evidence is not clear.
- Focusing on families by recognising the important role families play in providing support and inclusiveness in society.
- Acknowledging the different issues facing rural, remote and urban communities by tailoring actions designed to address the issues and needs in each of the different settings.

Emerging Issues and Increased Vulnerability

Misuse of prescription medicines was raised as an issue of concern at the round table discussion, particularly with respect to the increased incidence of poly-pharmacy, increasing client complexity (presenting with several co-existing conditions); and the low level of knowledge about pharmaceutical medicines use in Indigenous communities. Participants noted that medical practitioners are not currently well equipped to adequately manage a patient with several conditions including drug and alcohol issues, mental illness and Hepatitis C.

Participants noted several other new and emerging issues to be considered in developing the next NDS:

- Alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use remains the primary area of concerns for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.
- Loss and grief arising from fragmentation of families due to substance misuse affects the ability to pass on stories and is affecting culture in Aboriginal communities.
- There is a trend of increased violence in communities due to substance misuse.
- Additional priority needs to be placed on the increasing incidence of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- The alcohol and other drug workforce need the better equipped to be able to respond to an increasing number of clients with complex issues.
- The Internet is an increasing source of information on drugs and has lead to easy access to purchase ecstasy and meow-meow.
- The Ageing population – presents a complex future agenda coupled with disadvantage.
- There needs to be a strong link between the NDS and the national child protection framework.

Workforce and Capacity Building

Participants raised many issues and concerns about the workforces across different sectors. Participants felt there is a need for a workforce sub-strategy to ensure the remuneration, infrastructure, education and training needs are adequately addressed.

There were a number of areas identified where the next NDS may give direction. These include:

- Establishing a relevant and robust award framework for the alcohol and other drug workforce.
- Consider the diverse workforce needs of the law enforcement sector in order to support their expanded role.
- The challenges for workforce recruitment and retention is facing competition from other high paying sectors (e.g. mining). Consider building capacity of local people as a way of addressing the recruitment and retention especially in remote communities.
- Parity in wages between the government and non government organisations in the alcohol and other drug sector is an issue. NGOs are unable to match government salaries, yet they are currently delivering a high proportion of the alcohol and other drug treatment services.
- Develop NGO capability regarding the organisational qualifications.

Performance Measures

- There was a broad discussion about having discrete performance measures tied to the NDS. While many participants thought that without having performance measures tied to the NDS, its value was diminished, others felt this to be difficult as it provides a broad policy framework for guidance to jurisdictions. Others noted the complexity in getting agreement on a set of measures and then having the jurisdictions agree to collect the data. For example it was noted that collection of liquor licence fee data is only collected in three states and there is national agreement on the collection of alcohol sales data.
- It was noted that from a law enforcement perspective there is difficulty in measuring performance, especially in relation to measuring harm, as figures are activity based.
- A suggestion was made that rather than focussing on performance measures consideration be given to looking at a core set of indicators, which provide guidance on progress.

Governance Arrangements

The roundtable participants had little understanding of the role, representation or terms of reference of the IGCD, MCDS or the other key bodies involved in the governance of the NDS. They were unable to comment on the effectiveness of engagement as they did were not informed or aware of existing structures. There was a view among participants that the next NDS must secure the involvement and commitment from the various sectors and the community.

Participants noted the following:

- The National Indigenous Council on Alcohol and Drugs should have a formal place in the NDS governance structure.
- The peak bodies representing the NGO sector needs to have a national voice and be better engaged since they provide a high proportion of alcohol and drug treatment services.
- The need to better engage the liquor licensing authorities on the NDS.

Attachment A – Participants

Roundtable Adelaide, 23 April 2010

	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Alwin Chang	Aboriginal Health Council of SA	
2	Jan Burgess	Department of Education and Children's Services	Policy & Program Officer
3	Barry Sargent	Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor	Director-General
4	Mitch Dobbie	Geraldton Health Services and COMPARI Midwest Community Drug Services Team	Manager
5	Jennifer Rogers	Local Drug Action Groups	
6	Jillian Paull	Mission Australia	State Director
7	Leonie Karlsson	Mission Australia	Service Manager
8	Mark Saunders	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	
9	Allan Trifonoff	National Centre for Education, Training and Addiction	Deputy Director
10	Anne Roche	National Centre for Education, Training and Addiction	Director
11	Les Evans	Ngnowar-Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation	Chief Executive Officer
12	Gilbert Freeman	Ngwala Willumbong Co-op	Counsellor
13	Wayne Starling	NSW Police	
14	Ashleigh Lynch	OATSIH	Assistant Director
15	Julie Hanbury	Parent Drug Information Service	A/Coordinator
16	John Fox	Queensland Police	Manager
17	Fiona Bruce	SA Police	
18	Tim Pfitzner	SA Police	AOD Policy Coordinator
19	Andris Banders	South Australia Network of Drug and Alcohol Services	Executive Director
20	Craig Holloway	Telkaya	Chair Telakaya
21	Darryll Gaunt	WA Police, Licencing Enforcement Division,	
22	Wayne Flagge	Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies	Manager
		WORKING GROUP MEMBERS / REPRESENTATIVES	
23	Keith Evans	Drug and Alcohol Services SA	Executive Director