



GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# Together Against Drugs

THE WA STRATEGY  
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE  
ACTION PLAN



## **TOGETHER AGAINST DRUGS WA STRATEGY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE ACTION PLAN 1997 – 1999**

Drug abuse is a problem for Western Australia as it is nationally and internationally. It is a major concern for our whole community. It particularly confronts those of us who are parents.

*Together Against Drugs* is a comprehensive and continuing program to deal with abuse of both legal and illegal drugs in the State. It assumes that no single strategy is enough and that there are no simple solutions to this complex problem.

*Together Against Drugs* charts the Coalition Government's action plan for 1997 to 1999. It includes \$5 million in new funding over the two year period. It aims to prevent, as well as respond to, existing drug abuse problems.

*Together Against Drugs* follows nearly two years of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Drug Abuse (1995) which was initiated by the Premier, the Hon. Richard Court MLA.

These recommendations resulted in initiatives such as the school drug education program for all schools, information sessions for parents, the 'Drug Aware' campaign and the expansion of much needed services such as the methadone treatment. The recommendations also resulted in community action through Local Drug Action Groups.

Drug abuse is, however, an ever changing problem. It is affected by fluctuations in international supply and cultural trends. There is no room for complacency now and there is not likely to be in the future.

*Together Against Drugs* develops a comprehensive approach that is fundamental to the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse. The range of strategies necessarily includes education, health services, community supports, law enforcement and community action. *Together Against Drugs* also introduces important changes to the way the Government coordinates its approach to addressing drug abuse as well as how it can work in partnership with the community.

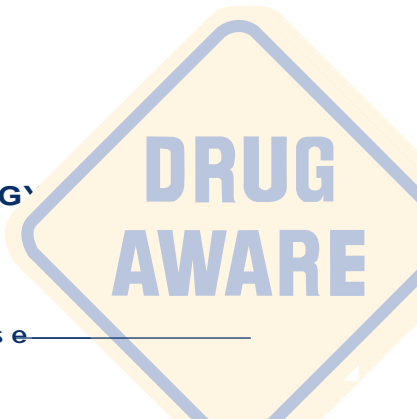
As the Minister responsible for the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse, I am aware of the great challenge of drug abuse confronting us. We can and will deal with this challenge in Western Australia as we work *Together Against Drugs*.



**RHONDA PARKER MLA**

**MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WA DRUG STRATEGY**

**26 JUNE, 1997**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Together Against Drugs* is a comprehensive across government plan with more than 70 initiatives, including responses through public education, health services, community support services, law enforcement and community action.

Drug abuse is an issue for which the State Government can provide vital leadership and essential services but it is not an issue that it can solve on its own. *Together Against Drugs* will establish a partnership between Government and the community in this campaign against drug abuse.

*Together Against Drugs* will further provide a clearer structural focus to the State Government's response to the drug problem. This will ensure that funding for the WA Drug Abuse Strategy will be more effectively allocated.

**The Ministerial Council for the Strategy Against Drug Abuse** will be formed immediately.

The Ministers for Police, Health, Education, Aboriginal Affairs, Family and Children's Services, Youth and the Attorney General will comprise the Council which will provide coordination across Government. There will be a corresponding senior officers group including officers with portfolio responsibility for drug issues in their agencies. The Council will work with the new WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office (WADASO) which will coordinate the implementation of the strategy.

A specialist **Alcohol and Drug Services Unit** will be established within the WA Health Department. The unit will be a centre of excellence in the provision of treatment for alcohol and drug problems. This will bring the current services of the Alcohol and Drug Authority into the context of the broad health system.

**The Western Australian Foundation for Community Action Against Drug Abuse** will be established as a trust fund with a \$1 million Government grant. Its aim will be to empower the community in the fight against drug abuse and to work in partnership with the Government.

A **Leaders Against Drug Abuse Team** is being formed to support the community's opposition to drug abuse. The team will take part in public education campaigns and school drug education initiatives. His Excellency, the Governor of Western Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery, AC MC, is the first member.

**Community Drug Service Teams** will be established across Western Australia. The teams will be made up of professionals in the areas of alcohol and drugs, youth and family services. There will be six teams in the country and four in the metropolitan area. The teams will provide a focus on early intervention and family support; support for schools dealing with drug abuse; and counselling and attention to specific problems such as solvent abuse. Families who need help to deal with drug abuse will be able to seek support at an early stage. The teams will link closely with, and support, Local Drug Action Groups.

**Local Drug Action Groups** will be expanded across Western Australia with an extra 20 groups to make a State-wide network of 40. The Local Drug Action Groups will be developed and strengthened through the involvement of police, local government, schools, Family and Children's Services and the provision of training.

**A major program will be developed with The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (WA Branch)** to make information available through local pharmacies. This will mean that more parents and families, as well as people who are drug users, will be reached with information, advice and support.

**Drug education courses for parents** will be available throughout Western Australia. Education materials will be developed in tandem with school drug education and as 'Drug Aware' parent resources.

**School drug education will be expanded** to reach all years in every school throughout the State with new curriculum and training for teachers. This project has been developed with the support of the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools and the Education Department of Western Australia.

**Methadone treatment will be expanded** through general practitioners and community-based pharmacies to meet the demands of heroin dependent people who require methadone treatment.

**A Heroin Overdose Strategy Group** will develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive strategy aimed at preventing heroin deaths. The group will include representatives from ambulance and hospital emergency medical services, the WA Health Department, alcohol and drug agencies, the WA Substance Users Association, the WA Police Service, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (WA Branch) and the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse. The strategy will include information and education for drug users, outreach and peer education for users, ensuring that emergency services employ the best approaches including the appropriate use of Narcan, investigating the feasibility of new proposals to get assistance to users and fast-tracked research with users to increase the effectiveness of education strategies.

**Street dealing of drugs** will be the target of a new and concerted operation by the WA Police Service.


**The penalties for high level and major drug suppliers will be strengthened** with the penalties for all drug suppliers being reviewed through a Parliamentary Select Committee.

**The capacity to seize and confiscate assets of drug suppliers will be strengthened** with new laws building upon existing laws. Seized assets could be used to tackle drug problems in the community.

**The next phase of the 'Drug Aware' public education campaign will focus on heroin.** This campaign is due to start soon.

*Together Against Drugs* concentrates on preventing drug abuse and responding to existing problems, as well as dealing with the challenges as they arise.

The ultimate aim is to engage a total spirit of support so that the entire community is working *Together Against Drugs*



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## POLICY FRAMEWORK

*The WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse sets out a strong and clear policy to guide the work of government agencies. It reflects the community's opposition to drug abuse and the need to respond in a practical way to existing problems.*

The Government's policy framework in relation to drug abuse stresses the need for a comprehensive approach and emphasises two principles:

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

The comprehensive approach developed in this action plan includes responses through public education, health services, community support services and law enforcement.

The Government will implement its program in close partnership with the community, community organisations, non-government agencies, schools, local governments, churches, the private sector and all professionals engaged in the alcohol and drug field.

## EDUCATION TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE

*The prevention of drug abuse is a critical priority. Long term education is a major focus of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse, covering both alcohol and other legal drugs as well as the illegal drugs. Education strategies will target parents, young people, the broader community, and professional groups. Information and education strategies to reduce the harm associated with existing drug abuse are also essential.*

- Effective drug education will be provided in all schools through the continuing implementation of the School Drug Education Project over the next three years. This will include development of curriculum, professional development for teachers, drug policies in all schools, and the involvement of parents and the community.
- Parents will receive education materials developed as part of the curriculum for the primary and secondary schools, so that they and their children can learn and talk together about drugs.
- More parents, families and drug users will be reached with information and advice regarding drugs through a major program with the Pharmacy Guild to make information available through local pharmacies.

- Drug education courses for parents, piloted in the last year, will be assessed, further developed and promoted.
- The “Drug Aware” public education campaign on illicit drugs will, in addition to supporting parents, target the use of particular drugs by youth and include a strong focus on heroin.
- Educational materials outlining lifesaving strategies will be developed and distributed to drug users.
- Drug users will be reached with information through peer education initiatives with support from the WA Substance Users Association.
- A comprehensive program of education initiatives will tackle the contribution of both alcohol and drugs to the road toll.
- In co-operation with industry, targeted drug education initiatives will be developed to focus on the dangers posed by drug abuse to work safety.
- Strategies will be developed in co-operation with local media outlets to limit the normalisation of illicit drug use occurring through the entertainment media and popular culture.
- Information and education for health and other professional services, such as general practitioners and youth workers, will be expanded substantially.
- A State Drug Education Co-ordination Group comprising the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office, the Health Department, the Education Department, the Police Service and the Office of Road Safety will assess and co-ordinate the ongoing effectiveness of drug education programs.

## HEALTH SERVICES

*It is essential that the health system can provide effective responses to drug and alcohol problems, both through core specialist services and by responding to the needs of general patients. Specialist health services are being enhanced and improved through the development of a health and medical services centre of excellence.*

- An Alcohol and Drug Services Unit that will be a health and medical centre of excellence, providing treatment for alcohol and drug problems, will be established within the Health Department. This will bring the current services of the Alcohol and Drug Authority into the context of the broad health system.
- Methadone treatment will be expanded further through general practitioners and community based pharmacies in order to meet the demands of heroin dependent people who require this treatment.



- New pharmacotherapies for heroin and other opiate dependence (such as buprenorphine, LAAM, and naltrexone) will be introduced if current Australian trials prove successful.
- An alcohol and drug policy unit within the Health Department will ensure that the broad health system, including hospital and community health services, can respond to the alcohol and drug problems of its patients.
- Hospital services will expand treatment of alcohol and drug problems through responses such as regional hospitals admitting inpatients in conjunction with general practitioners, and development of a program for the introduction of screening and brief counselling for alcohol problems.
- More people will receive treatment for alcohol and drug problems in community health centres and other health settings with support and training for professional staff being expanded. Work based learning programs, currently being piloted with Family and Children's Services, will support this development.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

*Families need support at an early stage if drug problems are emerging. Community based services for young people and adults, and their families, will provide early intervention and support. Those services will be expanded and improved, especially in outer metropolitan and country regions. The responses of mainstream human services and services for offenders with drug and alcohol problems will also be enhanced.*

- Services for young people and adults, and their families, will be expanded in metropolitan and country regional areas through the establishment of ten Community Drug Service Teams.
- Community Drug Service Teams will provide a focus on:
  - early intervention and family support;
  - support for Local Drug Action Groups;
  - support for schools dealing with drug abuse;
  - outreach counselling for youth;
  - general counselling service where services are currently minimal; and
  - attention to specific problems such as chronic solvent abuse.
- Support and training for the various human services agencies and professions will be expanded so that they can deal with the drug and alcohol problems of their clients.
- Offenders with alcohol or drug problems, serving custodial or community based sentences, will be able to access treatment during and following their sentences. An integrated range of interventions for both treatment and management of offenders, including detection and deterrence, medical management and general treatment strategies is being developed.

- Intoxicated youth will be assisted through support for sobering-up shelters to meet their needs.
- Services and community responses addressing alcohol abuse with Aboriginal people will be developed in accordance with the Aboriginal Alcohol Summit Report, “Living with Alcohol”.
- Services for Aboriginal people in Perth, provided through the Noongar Aboriginal Substance Abuse Service, will be improved and enhanced through a review and a services development plan.
- Drug abuse treatment services for agencies providing supported accommodation for youth, piloted in the last year, will be assessed and further developed in conjunction with Family and Children’s Services.
- Youth agency contracts will be assessed to ensure that all young people using drugs receive appropriate intervention.
- Alcohol and drug agency services will be enhanced and service agreements will be reviewed to ensure that best practice in alcohol and drug treatment is being provided.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

*Law enforcement is an essential part of the comprehensive approach of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse. It ensures that the State’s law enforcement is a credible deterrent, with a new operational focus on street dealing, a review of penalties for drug suppliers, and support for Police targeting major suppliers with task force approaches. At the local level, the strategy develops community policing approaches to drug law enforcement.*

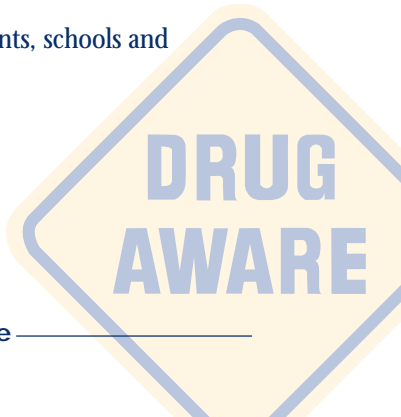
- Street dealing of drugs will be the target of a new concerted operation by the Police Service.
- The penalties for high level and major drug suppliers will be strengthened with the penalties for all drug suppliers being reviewed through a Parliamentary Select Committee.
- The capacity to seize and confiscate assets of drug suppliers will be strengthened, and could be used for tackling drug problems in the community, with new legislation building upon existing laws.
- The ability of the Police Service to target drug suppliers and mount large scale operations will be enhanced through:
  - the implementation of the telephone interception and listening device powers;
  - legislation to support covert operations and provide for higher penalties where firearms are used by offenders; and
  - further action to deploy Joint Task Forces on Drug Operations in co-operation with Commonwealth police agencies.

- Drink driving will be tackled through a proposed increase in penalties, raising the likelihood of licence loss and higher fines, and by simplifying procedures to reduce court time and delays.
- A practical schedule of penalties and testing procedures for driving under the influence of drugs will be developed subject to the outcome of a current feasibility study.
- Police will work closely with health and welfare agencies and community groups to develop a community based approach to drug law enforcement. Pilot programs will be established in the Mirrabooka metropolitan region and the Geraldton country region.
- Training of police officers will be enhanced through:
  - the integration of specialist Police Service education packages - covering illegal drugs, alcohol and crime, harm reduction, and working with youth - into regular Police training programs;
  - education of new and serving police officers about enforcement of the Tobacco Act; and
  - a Police Drug Information Guide for use by operational, school based and community policing officers as a resource for dealing with the community.

## COMMUNITY ACTION

*Drug abuse is an issue for which the Government can provide vital leadership and essential services but it is not an issue that it can solve on its own. The community needs to take an active role in any action against drug abuse. The WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse places a special emphasis on supporting the community to take action and will establish a Foundation For Community Action Against Drug Abuse, extend and strengthen the State-wide network of Local Drug Action Groups, under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor of Western Australia, and support prominent members of the community to provide leadership for the community's opposition to drug abuse.*

- A Foundation for Community Action Against Drug Abuse will be established with a \$1 million grant from the Government, to support the community action and community based initiatives.
- A further 20 Local Drug Action Groups will be established around the State, with a special emphasis on country regions, to make a State-wide network of 40 groups.
- Local Drug Action Groups will be developed and strengthened through:
  - the participation of police officers and representatives from local governments, schools and Family and Children's Services;
  - support being provided by linking with Community Drug Service Teams;
  - training for the groups and their broader community networks; and
  - an annual Community Action on Drug Abuse conference.



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- A “Leaders Against Drug Abuse Team”, involving His Excellency the Governor of Western Australia, will support the community’s opposition to drug abuse, participating in public education campaigns on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, and school drug education initiatives.
- The role models program, *Reach for the Dream* (managed by the WA Football Commission Community Service Division) will support public education campaigns on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, and school drug education initiatives.

## SPECIFIC ISSUE INITIATIVES

*The ever changing nature of drug abuse requires the continuing development of strategies to address problems as they arise and to prevent the growth of potential problems. This includes a strategy to deal with heroin overdoses and initiatives to tackle the problems of groups that are difficult to reach such as solvent abusers and steroid users. Alcohol abuse, which causes substantial harm to the community, also requires a continuing focus by the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse.*

### HEROIN OVERDOSE STRATEGY

- A Heroin Overdose Strategy Group will develop, implements and evaluate the approaches outlined below. Convened by the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office, it includes ambulance and hospital emergency medical services, the Health Department, alcohol and drug agencies, the WA Substance Users Association, the Police Service, the Pharmacy Guild and the National Centre for Research Into the Prevention of Drug Abuse.
- Information and education for users regarding high levels and variations in the strength of street heroin, the danger of mixing drugs including alcohol, and the need to call an ambulance to any overdose will be provided through posters and postcards at appropriate sites, warnings on fitpacks, and through users themselves.
- Outreach and peer education for users to educate other users regarding these hazards and simple resuscitation methods will be developed.
- Emergency services will employ the best approaches based on evidence, including the appropriate use of Narcan, and procedures which do not deter users from contacting them.
- The availability of methadone treatment will be expanded.
- Trends through the Coroners Office and ambulance services will be monitored, and fast-tracked research with users will support the effectiveness of education strategies.
- The feasibility of new proposals to get assistance to overdose victims will be investigated.
- The next phase of the “Drug Aware” public education media campaign will focus on heroin.

#### **STEROIDS**

- The growth of problems with steroids will be targeted with an education program together with law enforcement.

#### **SOLVENT ABUSE**

- A comprehensive approach to solvent abuse in regional centres and communities will be led and co-ordinated by the Health Department.
- Chronic solvent abusers in Perth and regional centres will be treated by expanding the availability of intensive case work through Community Drug Service Teams, working collaboratively with other government departments and youth agencies.
- The needs of intoxicated youth and associated community problems will be met by ensuring that sobering up facilities meet the needs of solvent abusers where appropriate.
- New avenues to protect solvent abusers who are a danger to themselves and the community will be developed in cooperation with the Minister for Police.
- Local Drug Action Groups will work with retailers to limit the supply of solvents.

#### **ALCOHOL ABUSE REDUCTION PROGRAM**

Responsible behaviour by social and licenced hosts, and by drinkers themselves, will be promoted through a program of strategies under the banner of “host responsibility” including:

- public education of consumers and both social and licenced hosts;
- enforcement of alcohol serving practices in licenced venues, including a demerit point system for licensees; and
- monitoring advertising of alcohol products according to a State code of practice.
- A study will be commissioned to examine the practical feasibility for alcohol taxation measures to reduce alcohol abuse and raise revenue to deal with alcohol problems.
- Alcohol Accords, implemented successfully in Fremantle, Perth and other centres, will be further developed in regional centres.

#### **TOBACCO**

- Local Drug Action Groups will work with retailers to limit the supply of tobacco to juveniles.
- Quit smoking services are being reviewed and their availability publicised through the Quit campaign.

#### PHARMACEUTICALS

- The safe and effective use of pharmaceuticals, particularly with respect to driving and minimising ‘doctor shopping’ will be supported in conjunction with Commonwealth health initiatives, and the medical and pharmaceutical professions.

#### ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

- Services, prevention programs and community responses addressing alcohol abuse with Aboriginal people will be developed in accordance with the “Aboriginal Alcohol Summit Report, “Living with Alcohol”.
- Services for Aboriginal people in Perth, provided through the Noongar Aboriginal Substance Abuse Service, will be improved and enhanced through a review and services development plan.
- As a major cause of early death, smoking will be tackled through a range of education initiatives.
- Specialist training in methadone treatment will be provided to medical officers employed by the community controlled Aboriginal health services where this is needed.
- Treatment for Aboriginal people’s alcohol and drug problems may be further enhanced through practice development projects with the community controlled Aboriginal health services, using work based learning approaches to enhance the interventions to address the problems of existing clients.

#### INNER CITY ISSUES

- Issues in the inner city will be addressed through a comprehensive strategy that co-ordinates law enforcement and service provision.

### INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

*Effective action requires that timely and up to date information is available to the Government, relevant agencies and the community. The WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse will ensure that Western Australian strategies are informed by national and international developments, and will co-ordinate the production and availability of local information as well as commission research into areas of immediate policy need.*

- The ability of the Government and the community to respond to drug abuse problems will be improved by providing regular and timely production of:
  - local statistical profiles,
  - Statistical Bulletins on issues of significance,
  - WA drug abuse indicators, and
  - comparative indicators with other States.

- Police resources will be better targeted through the development of local statistical profiles of drug and alcohol incidents. A pilot program will be conducted in the Fremantle region.
- Health and other resources will be better targeted through undertaking studies to monitor and analyse the Western Australian morbidity associated with alcohol and other drugs.
- The effectiveness of major developments will be assessed by the evaluation of initiatives such as community based methadone treatment and the School Drug Education Project.
- Trends in the quantity of youth drug abuse will be monitored in Western Australian surveys that include alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs.
- The effectiveness and co-ordination of treatment services will be enhanced by the redevelopment of the treatment data system for non-government organisations.
- Local crime prevention initiatives and the responses of the Police Service and the Ministry of Justice will be enhanced by the results of research analysing the links between burglary, armed robbery, property crime and drug abuse in Western Australia.
- The use of research to inform policy and practice will be substantially improved by convening a WA Research Co-ordination and Policy Advice Group.

## CO-ORDINATION AND STRUCTURE

*A Minister responsible for the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse, a Ministerial Council to support a whole of government approach and a WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office working together with a range of government, non-government, and community organisations, will sustain comprehensive, focused, and effectively co-ordinated State-wide activity.*

- A WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office will co-ordinate implementation of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse and provide policy advice to Government, administer funding for the strategy, and co-ordinate the availability of information.
- Co-ordination across government will be achieved through a WA Ministerial Council for the Strategy Against Drug Abuse with the Ministers for Police, Health, Education, Aboriginal Affairs, the Attorney General, Youth and Family and Children's Services; and a corresponding Senior Officers Group that will include officers with portfolio responsibility for drug issues in their agencies.
- Co-ordination at the local level will be achieved through bodies including senior regional representatives of Police, Health, Education, Aboriginal Affairs, Family and Children's Services and

Justice, integrated where appropriate with existing structures such as alcohol and drug committees or District Crime Prevention / Community Policing Committees.

## IMPLEMENTATION

*A continuing focus by the Government, effective co-ordination and substantial new funding will ensure the full implementation of the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse Action Plan 1997 -1999.*

- *Together Against Drugs* provides \$5 million in new funding over the two year period, to prevent as well as respond to existing drug abuse problems. Within the same time, the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office will administer funding of nearly \$25 million.
- The Action Plan for 1997 to 1999 charts the Government's strategy for the next two years. It is not a static program. Rather, it provides the capacity and the organisation to listen to the community and to work with it to respond to existing and newly emerging issues.



## NOTES



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