

**Western Australian
Drug and Alcohol
Strategy**

2005-2009

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the *Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009*. The strategy provides the broad direction for addressing problems relating to alcohol and other drug use in Western Australia over the coming years.

Drug and alcohol use affects the entire Western Australian community. The State Government is committed to reducing the impact of alcohol and other drug use through a variety of strategies in the areas of prevention and early intervention; treatment and support; and law, justice and enforcement. This will assist in achieving the strategy vision for Western Australians to value and lead healthy and safe lifestyles with access to the quality services and programs to prevent, reduce and delay alcohol and other drug-related harm.

The strategy builds upon the significant gains made under the previous drug strategy, achieved through the combined efforts of the Drug and Alcohol Office and key stakeholders, including the not-for-profit sector, community and other government departments. These gains include a more cohesive alcohol and other drug sector that is better integrated with broader human service sectors, including, but not limited to, justice, policing and health.

The strategy has been endorsed by the Cabinet Standing Committee on Social Policy and is provided as a guide for the development of effective *Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans* by key human and social service State Government departments. These plans will outline agency activities to achieve the desired outcomes expressed in the strategy.

Through the continuation of a comprehensive, across-government approach and through the contributions of other key stakeholders the implementation of the *Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009* will positively contribute to the health and well-being of all Western Australians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McGinty', written in a cursive style.

JIM MCGINTY MLA
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

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NOTE: The World Health Organisation defines 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 WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009. The strategic plan for addressing tobacco issues in Western Australia is entitled Western Australian Tobacco Action Plan 2001-2004, Taking the Lead. This document expired in 2004. However, a new WA Tobacco Action Plan (WA TAP 2005-2009) is being developed, following the release of the National Tobacco Strategy 2004-2009. The WA TAP 2005-2009 will provide an action plan for implementing key recommendations of the National Tobacco Strategy 2004-2009, and will set public health policy on tobacco control for Western Australia.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Since 2002, the State Government has been committed to 'Putting People First'. This commitment ensures that alcohol and other drug-related problems are treated primarily as social and health issues rather than just from a law enforcement approach.

Putting People First has resulted in the government:

- putting people and their needs at the centre of planning and responses to problems;
- putting people's lives before political ideology;
- providing the necessary supports to assist all Western Australians to fully participate in our community;
- recognising the diversity of the Western Australian community;
- ensuring that people are well informed about alcohol and other drug-related issues, services and programs;
- disrupting the supply of drugs, with a specific emphasis on targeting those who benefit from the manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs; and
- addressing new challenges in a pragmatic way.

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The State Government is committed to the involvement and engagement of the community in addressing alcohol and other drug-related problems and harms. Such activity is conducted in a manner that is transparent and accountable to the community.

There are a number of state and national policy papers and guidelines that underpin the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009. These include, but are not limited to, the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans 2005-2009 and other strategies that guide practice.

Building on Past Achievements

In 2005, a review of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2002-2005 was undertaken. Information gleaned from this process was combined with an across-government review of the 2002-2005 experience. Together with the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, these processes highlighted that key aspects of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy were still relevant and would benefit from their continuation and consolidation across the state. As such, the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009 builds on the 2002-2005 experience and aims to strengthen and further the achievements made under that strategy.

Since 2002, Putting People First has utilised a whole-of-government and whole-of-alcohol and other drug sector approach to ensure that services are integrated and responses to individuals and communities are delivered in the most efficient and effective manner. Significant and effective partnerships have been developed between and within government agencies and the not-for-profit sector to achieve the outcomes of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy. It is the combined effort of government and key stakeholders (including the not-for-profit sector) that enables a comprehensive and integrated approach.

The State Government has, and continues to be, committed to improving responses to those people who experience problems with alcohol and other drug use. Some sections of the Western Australian community experience greater harm and problems from alcohol and other drug use than others.

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides direction for the combined efforts of the community, government and non-government organisations. The key strategy areas of:

- prevention and early intervention;
- treatment and support; and
- law, justice and enforcement

continue to guide activity to address alcohol and other drug problems within our community.

DIRECTIONS FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Vision

For Western Australians to value and lead healthy and safe lifestyles with access to quality services and programs to prevent, reduce and delay alcohol and other drug-related harm.

Aims

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

- promote healthy lifestyles and communities;
- promote connectedness between children and young people with school, families and communities;
- involve the community, particularly priority groups, in developing, implementing and reviewing appropriate responses to alcohol and other drug issues;
- promote the resiliency of individuals, families and communities to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug related harm;
- reduce the level of negative consequences associated with alcohol and other drug use, such as social disruption and loss of productivity; and
- reduce the level of alcohol and other drug-related crime committed.

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Values

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy is underpinned by the values of:

Inclusiveness

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

Compassion and understanding

Every individual has the right to compassionate care and to be treated with dignity, free from harassment and discrimination.

Equity

Every individual 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 appropriate to the local environment

Deliberations, planning and application of policies, strategies, and programs must consider, acknowledge and incorporate the history, traditions, diversity and circumstances of the particular Aboriginal people, to which meaningful benefit is the intended outcome.

Principles

The WA 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 Groups

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy continues to provide direction for effectively working with key groups in our community that require targeted attention. It is acknowledged that all sectors of the community face general and specific problems from alcohol and other drug use, however evidence demonstrates that some groups are in greater need than others.

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Aboriginal People and Communities

In line with the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, an increased emphasis on Aboriginal people and communities is required. Alcohol and other drug use and related harm among Aboriginal people are significant concerns. Particular drugs of significance include alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines and volatile substances. Alcohol and other drug use is intertwined with broader social issues including continuing oppression from colonisation, family violence and systemic social disadvantage. In addressing Aboriginal issues, the government will:

- make cultural security (as defined in the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy values) central to government agency and non-government organisations' response; and
- prioritise prevention and early intervention strategies, particularly those that encourage an across-government approach and are aimed at social and structural determinants of health.

Children and Young People

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

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

Parental alcohol and other 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 alcohol and other drugs can also lead to family breakdown.

Holistic government and community responses to alcohol and other drug use must address issues such as youth homelessness, sexual abuse, neglect, mental illness, domestic violence, conflict with parents and other factors.

To address these issues, the government will:

- develop preventive and early intervention strategies linked with other initiatives across government;
- develop family-focused strategies to assist parents with alcohol and other drug problems to address their alcohol and other drug use and strengthen parenting skills, in order 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 alcohol and other drug use through models of practice development and shared care;
- target specific drugs as patterns and trends of use change; and
- increase targeted alcohol and other drug education and awareness-raising for children and young people.

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People from Regional, Rural and Remote Communities

Regional, rural and remote communities face particular challenges related to alcohol and other drug use for a broad range of reasons, including limited access to services. The 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.

Families

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. The government will:

- ensure family sensitive practice in all alcohol and other drug agencies; and
- continue to raise awareness and responsiveness of non-government organisations and government agencies to the complex needs of families.

Priority Issues

The government must be flexible in its approach to alcohol and other drug problems so that it can cater for key concerns relating to alcohol and other drug use, such as volatile substance use, and emerging issues. Such issues will require targeting areas (specific drugs, problems, priority groups or geographical regions) for the development of across-government, evidence-based responses.

Alcohol

It is acknowledged that there are people within the community who are at greater risk than others of experiencing alcohol-related problems and harm. The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy takes a whole-of-population approach, incorporating those at higher risk by creating environments that protect against those factors known to create alcohol-related problems. A benefit is expected to flow to the entire population, and priority groups, by the government:

- helping young people avoid high risk alcohol consumption;
- promoting community action to support responses to alcohol-related problems;
- encouraging and monitoring the responsible supply and service of alcohol;
- enhancing access to treatment and support for people affected by alcohol-related problems; and
- undertaking monitoring and evaluation to inform service delivery and quality.

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People with Co-occurring Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use Problems

People with co-occurring health and alcohol and other drug use problems present a range of challenges to the government in being able to effectively prevent, reduce and/or treat harms. Those people with co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug use problems have complex needs. The complexities and related problems associated with this co-occurrence highlights the need for additional attention to be directed to improving outcomes for this section of the community.

In addressing this issue, the government will:

- develop a comprehensive approach in partnership with key stakeholders; and
- develop targeted strategies for the use of specific drug types that result in increased harm.

Priority Areas for Action

Consistent with the directions of the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy embraces the concept of harm minimisation, which encompasses the core functions of supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction.

Based on the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, the three areas of prevention and early intervention; treatment and support; and law, justice and enforcement are the priorities of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Under each of these three areas, realistic and sustainable activity will be achieved through a pragmatic approach.

Underpinning each of the three priority areas for action, the government acknowledges the need to ensure quality programs that are delivered in the most efficient and effective manner possible. As such, initiatives will:

1. promote quality services and performance management through ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention is fundamental to the Putting 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, and provide safe environments.

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Important directions emphasised in the model include early childhood intervention, mechanisms for community inclusion and a greater integration of the full resources of the government in prevention.

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

2. contribute to the reduction of risk factors and the development of protective factors and resiliency relating to problems associated with alcohol and other drug use in local communities;
3. work with the community to achieve a 'drinking culture' that is consistent with decreasing the problems associated with hazardous and harmful alcohol use;
4. support physical environments that decrease problems associated with alcohol and other drug use;
5. develop and implement initiatives that involve early assessment and brief intervention measures to reduce the harm resulting from alcohol and other drug use;
6. undertake initiatives that develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the community, particularly priority groups, to prevent, delay and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems;
7. initiate and maintain evidence-based education, policy, legislation, workforce development, compliance and enforcement, and monitoring and surveillance initiatives that will prevent, delay and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems;

8. prevent and/or delay the onset of illicit drug use and the hazardous use of alcohol and other drugs through effective partnerships between the community, non-government and government agencies; and
9. involve local communities in strategies to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems.

Treatment and Support

A comprehensive range of early intervention, treatment, support and rehabilitation services for people affected by alcohol and other drug use, including families, is required. These services will aim to produce high quality outcomes for those involved and 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 users in treatment early in the course of problematic alcohol and other drug use.

Treatment services will be developed to provide a comprehensive range of treatment options for people. This includes further development of linkages across alcohol and other drug agencies and the broader health, human service and social policy systems. The identified priority groups will be targeted by services.

Initiatives will aim to:

10. ensure that there is a comprehensive range of community-oriented, evidence-based treatment and support services, responsive to client needs, throughout the state;
11. improve access to services to meet the particular needs of priority groups;
12. 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;
13. ensure that services operate as an integrated network, reflecting continuity with the underlying values and principles of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy;
14. ensure that there are effective partnerships between non-government organisations and government agencies that respond to communities and people affected by alcohol and other drugs; and
15. ensure treatment and support services develop and strengthen partnerships across government. Key government departments will develop Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans to articulate their role in a comprehensive alcohol and other drug treatment response.

Law, Justice and Enforcement

Putting People First also entails appropriate legal responses to alcohol and other drug use. Supply reduction initiatives create an environment that can build upon the successes of harm and demand reduction.

The way in which laws are developed and enforced has a significant impact on alcohol and other drug-related outcomes. Alcohol and other drug law reform, which can minimise negative impacts while ensuring the dangers of alcohol and other drugs are also addressed, will be a continuing priority of the government. This also includes appropriate education for the community in understanding resultant changes.

Law enforcement initiatives will aim to:

16. disrupt and reduce the supply of illicit drugs to optimise the success of demand and harm reduction initiatives;
17. reduce the illegal supply of alcohol and reduce alcohol-related crime;
18. link with prevention and early intervention initiatives by exploring collaborative models to reduce the harms experienced by alcohol and other drug users;
19. link to treatment by maximising the number of offenders with alcohol and other drug problems engaged in diversion programs at each stage of the criminal justice system; and
20. enact and explore a legal framework that achieves a balance between strongly discouraging and penalising the illicit drug trade, encouraging people into alcohol and other drug treatment, and avoiding undue legal penalties for people who use drugs.

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The criminal justice and correctional system recognises that the relationship between offenders' use of drugs and crime is multi-dimensional.

Criminal justice and correctional system initiatives will aim to:

21. ensure treatment for people affected by alcohol and other drugs is delivered with compassion and respect, within the context of their offending behaviour;
22. reduce drug use and associated problems by offenders and others identified in the justice system; and
23. reduce re-offending associated with drug use.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Implementation

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides the basis for the development of Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans by government agencies who are members of the Drug and Alcohol Office Senior Officers' Group. Each action plan will provide a framework for activity addressing alcohol and other drug problems within the Western Australian community.

The Senior Officers' Group is comprised of senior representation from key human service and social policy government departments. The Senior Officers' Group will oversee the implementation of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy and the Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans. The Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans also link with other government alcohol and other drug strategies that have been endorsed by members of the Senior Officers' Group for their departments to support. These key whole-of-government strategies include:

- Strong Spirit Strong Mind: Western Australian Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2005-2009 (draft);
- Western Australian Volatile Substance Use Plan 2005-2009 (draft); and
- Western Australian Alcohol Plan 2005-2009 (draft).

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Information and activity will be encouraged across government departments through the Senior Officers' Group and other existing structures, such as the Human Services Regional Managers' Forums. Through these avenues, agencies will be able to implement the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy and the Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans in a coordinated manner.

Implementation of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy is represented in Appendix One.

Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans

The Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans will:

- reflect the vision, aims and priorities of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy;
- reflect activity identified in plans for priority areas, such as those for alcohol, Aboriginal Western Australians and volatile substance use;
- specify target populations where appropriate for each activity or program;
- specify responsibilities and timelines for each activity; and
- link to, and be consistent with, other relevant and related strategies operating across and within other departments.

Evaluation and Performance Monitoring

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy aims to ensure that people within the community value and lead healthy lifestyles, whilst ensuring access to quality services and programs that prevent, reduce or delay alcohol and other drug-related harms and problems.

The Senior Officers' Group will monitor the implementation of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy and Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans. This will include regular review of across-government activity to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, particularly those for priority groups. The Senior Officers' Group will also have a role in the identification of emerging issues.

The Senior Officers' Group will develop an annual report on the implementation of the Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans. These reports will include government activity and monitor the level of implementation of the Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans. The reports will also incorporate across-government performance indicators to reflect progress in the three key strategy areas of prevention and early intervention; treatment and support; and law, justice and enforcement.

12 The government, through the Human Services Directors' General Group, will monitor department activity, implementation of the Agency Drug and Alcohol Action Plans and performance at the whole-of-government level through the annual reports. This activity will be referred by the Human Services Directors' General Group to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Social Policy for final noting and endorsement.

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

The government is open and accountable to the community. A continuing priority is the provision of a community voice on alcohol and other drug policy. *Voice*, an independent community advisory council, will act as a conduit between government and the community, and vice versa, on alcohol and other drug policy and programs. Additional input from key stakeholders, the community and others will also be sought during the development of new strategies and plans as appropriate.

KEY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. 2004. *National Drug Strategy: Australian Integrated Framework 2004–2009*. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.

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APPENDIX ONE

Mapping whole-of-government alcohol and other drug-related actions to the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009.



APPENDIX TWO

The following provides a list of the 23 individual strategies that government will provide an annual report against:

1. promote quality services and performance management through ongoing monitoring and evaluation;

Prevention and Early Intervention

2. contribute to the reduction of risk factors and the development of protective factors and resiliency relating to problems associated with alcohol and other drug use in local communities;
3. work with the community to achieve a 'drinking culture' that is consistent with decreasing the problems associated with hazardous and harmful alcohol use;
4. support physical environments that decrease problems associated with alcohol and other drug use;
5. develop and implement initiatives that involve early assessment and brief intervention measures to reduce the harm resulting from alcohol and other drug use;
6. undertake initiatives that develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the community, particularly priority groups, to prevent, delay and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems;
7. initiate and maintain evidence-based education, policy, legislation, workforce development, compliance and enforcement, and monitoring and surveillance initiatives that will prevent, delay and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems;
8. prevent and/or delay the onset of illicit drug use and the hazardous use of alcohol and other drugs through effective partnerships between the community, non-government and government agencies;
9. involve local communities in strategies to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug-related problems;

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Treatment and Support

10. ensure that there is a comprehensive range of community-oriented, evidence-based treatment and support services, responsive to client needs, throughout the state;
11. improve access to services to meet the particular needs of priority groups;
12. 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;
13. ensure that services operate as an integrated network, reflecting continuity with the underlying values and principles of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy;
14. ensure that there are effective partnerships between non-government organisations and government agencies that respond to communities and people affected by alcohol and other drugs;



Drug and Alcohol Office
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