MORE MONEY TO FIGHT ILLICIT DRUGS

Reducing the harm which illicit drugs cause to the community is a priority for the Howard Government. In the past nine years, the Government has provided more than $1 billion in funding for its Tough on Drugs strategy, resulting in less people using illicit drugs and more drugs being seized.

The 2005-06 Budget provides $21.8 million in new funding for programs to help young people say “no” to illegal drugs and to provide more treatment and rehabilitation to drug users.

The new funding for 2005-06 comprises:

- $0.85 million for the National Illicit Drugs Campaign;
- $12.0 million for the Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program over two years from 2006-07;
- $8.0 million for Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities to address problems with alcohol and drug abuse; and
- $1.0 million for the Australian National Council on Drugs over three years.

An additional $850,000 will be provided in 2005-06 to extend the National Illicit Drugs Campaign. Prevention initiatives such as this play a key role in educating young people about the risks and negative consequences of illicit drug use.

The campaign includes national advertising, public relations activities, booklets, a web site and a telephone information line.

The additional funding for the Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program is to ensure existing treatment services can continue to operate after the current contracts end in June 2006. Around 170 services across Australia are presently funded. Since the program began in 1997, more than $124 million has been provided in funding.

An additional $8 million will be provided to help Indigenous communities reduce the incidence of drug and alcohol abuse among their people. This funding will be allocated, in consultation with the Australian National Council on Drugs and the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs, to ensure it is directed to effective and appropriate activities.
The Government will increase its support for *Of Substance* magazine, to make it more accessible for health professionals. People working in the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector will no longer have to pay a $50 subscription to receive the magazine, which provides the latest information on drug research and best practice. The cost of this measure will be absorbed within the Health and Ageing portfolio.

The Australian National Council on Drugs is the key independent body advising the government on drug issues and comprises experts from voluntary and community organisations, law enforcement, and the health and social welfare areas.

The extra $1 million in funding, over the coming three financial years, recognises the increased costs associated with its responsibilities, which are to enhance the partnership between government and the community. The Council has pivotal advisory, advocacy and representative functions, with a significant role to provide government Ministers with independent, expert advice on matters related to licit and illicit drugs.

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