



Media release

The Hon Mary Wooldridge MP

Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Women's Affairs
Minister for Community Services

Friday 25 January 2013

Reducing the alcohol and drug toll: Victoria's plan

The Coalition Government today released Victoria's first whole-of-government strategy to reduce the impact of alcohol and drug abuse in the Victorian community.

Launching *Reducing the alcohol and drug toll: Victoria's plan 2013-2017*, Minister for Mental Health Mary Wooldridge said the plan provided a new agenda to improve the way police, courts, schools, hospitals, health and community services and the broader community work together to bring down the alcohol and drug toll.

"The Coalition Government is committed to reducing the rates of risky drinking, tackling the misuse of pharmaceutical drugs and reducing illegal drug use and harm in Victoria," Ms Wooldridge said.

"This plan articulates how we will achieve that change."

Ms Wooldridge said the 15-point plan provided a comprehensive response to the three major drug types: alcohol, pharmaceutical drugs and illegal drugs.

"This plan incorporates major Coalition Government initiatives for vulnerable families, as well as preventing family violence," Ms Wooldridge said.

"The plan includes a new partnership with VicHealth to develop and deliver a cultural change program to promote healthier attitudes to excessive drinking and drunk behaviour in our community.

"It also includes measures to effectively regulate alcohol supply with strengthened reforms to liquor licensing laws."

Ms Wooldridge said the Coalition Government was also acting to reverse recent increases in drug crime and drug use.

"Drugs are dangerous to the community and also to the drug user," Ms Wooldridge said.

"This plan includes actions to protect the community from illegal drugs by disrupting the supply of these drugs through targeting large-scale producers and traffickers of illegal drugs and ensuring tougher law enforcement.

“We will also work with Victoria Police to collect data to track alcohol and drug-related offences to inform policing and enforcement operations and reduce future harm,” Ms Wooldridge said.

“At the same time, we will reform and improve access to drug diversion programs to link more people earlier into drug assessment and treatment.”

Ms Wooldridge said that alcohol and drug treatment and prevention services, which receive \$146 million funding this financial year, are also being overhauled.

“We will change the way the Government funds, organises and manages treatment services to ensure they are more responsive to individual needs and can respond to emerging issues and drug trends, such as the increasing prevalence of ice,” Ms Wooldridge said

“We will establish a new centralised bed register and intake system, new standardised assessment and screening methods, and an area-based model for pharmacotherapy co-ordination.

“This strategy outlines real action to save lives and help drug users get on the path of recovery through our doubling of funding for pharmacotherapy, improving access to general practitioners who prescribe pharmacotherapy, and exploring the use of naloxone as a first aid tool.”

Recognising the increasing number of alcohol and drug-related hospital admissions, \$12 million will be provided to 21 hospital emergency departments across Victoria to specifically support people with alcohol and drug-related problems.

The plan provides a specific focus on pharmaceutical misuse, which is a growing problem across Australia that requires a national commitment to addressing.

“We will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to meet its commitment to delivering and funding a system to help doctors and pharmacists prevent misuse of pharmaceutical drugs and doctor-shopping,” Ms Wooldridge said.

“In addition, we will convene a Victorian summit on pharmaceutical drug misuse, to share the evidence and identify practical solutions to keep this problem in check.”

Underpinning the plan will be a new advisory board made up of community members, businesses and experts, to provide alcohol and drug policy advice to Ministers.

New measures will also be introduced to monitor the progress of the strategy and assess the impact of reforms.

To access *Reducing the alcohol and drug toll: Victoria's plan 2013-2017*, visit www.health.vic.gov.au/aod/strategy

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