



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement report:
*Australia's illicit drug problem: Challenges and opportunities
for law enforcement*

February 2026

The Australian Government thanks the Committee for its work on these important issues. The Australian Government provides the following responses to the Committee's recommendations contained in the report:

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Australian Government re-establish a governance structure under the National Cabinet architecture, bringing together representatives with responsibility for law enforcement and health across the Commonwealth, states and territories, to oversee the implementation of the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation.

The Australian Government acknowledges the importance of a national partnership between health and law enforcement, noting implementation of the National Drug Strategy and drug-related policies, programs and expenditure is a shared responsibility of all Australian governments that cuts across multiple portfolios.

At the Ministerial level, the Health Ministers Meeting (HMM) works to progress health issues of national importance which require cross-border collaboration. It is made up of the health ministers of each state and territory government, along with the Australian Government Minister for Health and Aged Care. Relevant law enforcement ministers can be invited to the HMM to progress issues with cross-sectoral responsibility. Additionally, the Police Ministers Council (PMC) is a forum for coordination and collaboration to achieve improved policy outcomes and ensure the safety and security of Australian and New Zealand citizens. The PMC comprises the Minister for Home Affairs, the police ministers from every Australian state and territory and the New Zealand Police Minister.

Additionally, there are a number of existing Commonwealth and national forums that can be leveraged to progress implementation of the *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026* by bringing together relevant agencies for discussion and providing key updates to senior officials.

At an operational level, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Policy Officers Group facilitates information sharing between jurisdictional and Commonwealth health officers. This group also engages with jurisdictional and Commonwealth law enforcement.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Australian Government undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the National Drug Strategy as a matter of priority to measure the successes and shortfalls of the existing Strategy and inform the development of the next National Drug Strategy.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation.

The National Drug Strategy is a shared responsibility between Commonwealth, state, and territory, health, and law enforcement agencies.

The House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Disability is undertaking an inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia. The inquiry will consider the effectiveness

of current programs and initiatives across all jurisdictions to improve prevention and reduction of alcohol and other drug-related health, social and economic harms.

Initial work has commenced to inform the approach for the next iteration of a national strategy or framework. This will be further informed by the resulting report and recommendations from the inquiry.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the evaluation of the National Drug Strategy (recommendation 2 above), include a review by the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments, of the current resourcing for the three pillars of the Strategy. Should the differences still be substantial, consideration should be given to increasing funding for demand and harm reduction measures. Any additional allocation in funding should not come at the expense of funding for law enforcement's supply reduction efforts.

The Government notes this recommendation.

Commonwealth and state and territory governments allocate funding based on a range of different factors and within the context of other fiscal priorities. Although state and territory governments are primarily responsible for funding and implementing alcohol and drug related services and programs, the Australian Government is also investing significant funding to reduce the harms of alcohol and other drug use.

The Australian Government invested \$870 million over four years (from 1 July 2023) to support prevention, research, communication strategies and drug and alcohol treatment services and activities under the Drug and Alcohol Program.

Additionally, the reforms to the opioid dependence treatment (ODT) program represent significant investment in harm reduction. On 1 July 2023, ODT medicines were listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) under the Section 100 Highly Specialised Drugs Program (Community Access). Complementing the PBS investment, the 2023-24 Budget allocated \$377.3 million over 4 years (and \$98.4 million ongoing) for the ODT Community Pharmacy Program which also commenced on 1 July 2023.

The Australian Government has also invested \$142.2 million over four years (from 1 July 2023) for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to expand its existing capabilities to target and disrupt organised crime both domestically and internationally. The AFP's Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime Enterprise Crime Strategy aims to ensure illicit drugs do not reach Australian shores by targeting organised crime syndicates and large-scale illicit drug importations.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission undertake research to clarify what proportion of people arrested for possession of illicit drugs are concurrently charged with another criminal offence and would not have come to law enforcement attention but for the concurrent (non-drug related) offence.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation.

Research informing this recommendation is best aligned with the work of the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), which focuses on criminological research work of this nature.

The Government supports the AIC undertaking further research into the possession of illicit drugs, consistent with the broader research program of the AIC.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission research to understand the impacts of decriminalisation in Australian and international jurisdictions where reforms have been implemented. Such research should, where possible, evaluate the longitudinal impacts on individuals, communities and law enforcement agencies to provide an evidence base to inform future policy decisions.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation.

The Australian Government is committed to understanding the impacts of decriminalisation in Australian jurisdictions where reforms have been implemented.

The Australian Government notes the importance of learning from our international counterparts and evaluating the longitudinal impacts on individuals, communities, and law enforcement agencies.

Research may provide an evidence base to inform future policy decisions, especially where the applicability of international approaches to the Australian context is considered.

The Government supports the AIC undertaking further research into the impacts of decriminalisation, consistent with the broader research program of the AIC.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Australian Government support research to develop an effective roadside cannabis impairment test to be used by law enforcement, including the current work being undertaken in Victoria.

The Government notes this recommendation.

Noting that roadside testing is a matter for state and territory law enforcement, the Australian Government will facilitate the sharing of information between jurisdictions on work and trials underway in jurisdictions.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that future drug awareness campaigns run by the Australian Federal Police be evidence-based and subject to evaluation.

The Government agrees with this recommendation.

The AFP is committed to working with relevant external partners on future drug awareness campaigns, including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program, and health agencies.