



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE

Inquiry into the public communications campaigns targeting drug and substance abuse

On 16 October 2019, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (committee) resolved to inquire into and report on public communications campaigns targeting demand for drugs and substance abuse. The report of that inquiry was tabled yesterday, Wednesday 12 May 2021, in Parliament.

The committee examined the impact of public communications campaigns on illicit drug abuse by different community cohorts. The committee received evidence from a wide range of sources, including drug and alcohol addiction treatment services, anti-drug advocacy organisations, the Department of Health and law enforcement agencies.

The committee heard that the economic cost of opioid, cannabis and methamphetamine drug abuse is over \$27 billion per year. This figure does not include the additional economic costs of up to \$12.2 billion in harms to partners and children of people using methamphetamines, and does not include the incalculable social, health and emotional harms caused by drug abuse to individuals, their families and their children.

The evidence received by this inquiry indicated that while there are deeply held and sometimes contradictory views on public communications campaigns to reduce drug demand, many such campaigns have been effective in reducing drug demand.

The committee has made four key recommendations in its report:

1. That the Australian Government implement a new public communications campaign that will support law enforcement agencies' efforts to reduce current and future illicit drug demand.
2. That a public communications campaign should have, certain characteristics, including:
 - targeted messages to different cohorts;
 - a national schools element;
 - information on addiction treatments;
 - using both quantitative and qualitative measures for efficacy; and,
 - a long-term approach of at least 3–5 years.

3. That the Australian Government ensure that law enforcement bodies have a strong, equal voice in developing policies and strategies to reduce illicit drug demand, including drug treatment services.
4. That the Australian Government support research into the efficacy of addiction treatment programs in reducing drug-related crime recidivism.

The inquiry's terms of reference and further information can be found on the committee's website at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Law_Enforcement/CommsCampaignsDrugAbuse or by contacting the committee secretariat on +61 2 6277 3419 or le.committee@aph.gov.au.