



Committee investigates influence of drug and alcohol use on Indigenous juvenile crime rates

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will hear from the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) on Thursday, 25 February, as part of its inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system.

NIDAC states that alcohol and drug misuse is a primary cause, rather than symptom, of the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration. Programs that target alcohol and substance abuse can therefore have a significant impact on these rates. The NIDAC submission further argues that the cost of effective health services and holistic drug and alcohol rehabilitation is far lower than the cost of incarceration.

Representatives from NIDAC will discuss with the Committee the close relationship between alcohol and substance misuse and Indigenous offending. NIDAC is the leading voice in Indigenous alcohol and drug policy, and has recommended a national strategy to train and establish a specialised Indigenous workforce of health practitioners that can address prisoner health and reintegration.

The Committee is investigating how health and justice authorities around Australia can better coordinate the provision of services for Indigenous juveniles and young adults. Next week the Committee will commence its national program of public hearings and inspections, beginning with roundtables in Melbourne and Sydney and a visit to programs in Dubbo.

The Hon Bob Debus MP, Committee Chair, said, "Indigenous juveniles are highly over-represented in Australian imprisonment and recidivism rates, and it is important to identify those programs that act as circuit-breakers for Indigenous youth involved in the criminal justice system. We know that there are many good programs operating around the country, but there are also areas where there are no appropriate intervention services for Indigenous youth."

**Public hearing program:
12.15pm, Thursday 25 February 2010
Committee Room 1R2 Parliament House
National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee**

To listen to the public hearing on your computer, go to <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

For background information, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or atsia.reps@aph.gov.au or see the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/atsia>

For details of the Committee's upcoming **interstate public hearing program**, check the website at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/sentencing/hearings.htm>