

Mrs Bronywn Bishop
Chair
Inquiry into the Impact of
Illicit Drug Use on Families
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Bishop,

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of Illicit Drug Use on Families. The PHAA is a forum for the promotion of the health of the public as well as being a professional resource for public health personnel. The Association provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on public health. The PHAA is a non-partly political organisation.

PHAA believes that illicit drug use is primarily a health and social issue and that the main objective of any effort by individuals, communities, non-government organisations and governments in regard to illicit drugs must be the reduction of death and morbidity caused by the abuse of drugs.

While we believe that there is considerable action that must be undertaken around crime and corruption associated with the ability to get hold of drugs we emphasis the need to focus on prevention of drug use, and the provision of support for drug users and their families. In particular, we believe that such support is required for individuals to gain access to health and rehabilitation services.

We believe that Australia needs to develop a cross-jurisdictional and cross-portfolio approach to prevention and early intervention, which recognises and addresses the antecedents to social problems including illicit drug use. Such an approach would need to include both universal and targeted strategies aimed at building resilience, maximising protective factors and minimising risk factors. There is a strong body of evidence around effective interventions; in particular those that reduce drug related harm to both the individual and communities. Such programs (eg needle and syringe programs, methadone maintenance treatment) should be supported and where appropriate increased.

The PHAA also strongly believes that attention must be given to the issues of reducing substance abuse within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Support for health and social programs to help these communities must come from

both the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments if substantial changes are to be effected.

I have attached a copy of the PHAA's Policy Statement on Licit and Illicit Drug Use. The PHAA strongly supports any recommendations that would increase the funding for health and social intervention programs.

Further, the PHAA would like to endorse the submission provided by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

Either I or one of the PHAA members with a background in illicit drugs would be happy to talk to the Committee if you think that would be useful. I can be contacted on (02) 62852373 or at plaut@phaa.net.au

Yours sincerely

Pieta Laut
Executive Director
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