



NATIONAL DRUG AND
ALCOHOL RESEARCH CENTRE

RESEARCH CENTRE WELCOMES CANNABIS STRATEGY

16 May 2006

For immediate release

The announcement yesterday that the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy has endorsed Australia's first National Cannabis Strategy has been welcomed by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC).

NDARC was appointed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing to coordinate the development of the Strategy, with Professor Richard Mattick, Director of the Centre as Chair of the Project Management Group.

The Strategy was informed by existing knowledge and research and a comprehensive consultation process. National consultation forums were undertaken, providing relevant stakeholders with the opportunity to communicate ideas about the Strategy.

Although the use of cannabis has fallen in recent years, it is still by far the most widely used illicit drug in Australia. According to the latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 1.8 million Australians have used cannabis in the past year, and 750,000 have used it in the past week. Data from hospital and drug treatment services suggest that more people are seeking treatment for problems associated with their cannabis use than in the past.

It is currently thought that cannabis can lead to a variety of problems. Cannabis use has been shown to be related to mental health disorders, respiratory problems, and adverse social outcomes such as interpersonal, legal and financial problems arising from cannabis dependence. Those who begin cannabis use at an early age and who use it heavily are at the greatest risk of suffering from such problems.

Professor Mattick welcomed the endorsement of the Strategy.

"Given the widespread use of cannabis, the harms associated with use, and the increase in demand for cannabis treatment, today's endorsement of Australia's first National Cannabis Strategy represents an important step towards responding to this issue."
ends

For further information contact Paul Dillon

(02) 9385 0226 (W)
0419 402 099 (M)