

PREMIER'S DRUG PREVENTION COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

Premier's Drug Prevention Council

Annual Report 2005–06

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1. Chairperson's report



Recently, the Premier's Drug Prevention Council (PDPC) celebrated the five-year anniversary of the joint sitting of the Victorian Parliament that was convened to address drug issues and resulted in the creation of the PDPC. The original aim the PDPC set itself was to prevent alcohol and drug related problems from occurring in the first place. Experience over the past five years has taught us that equally important to this goal is aiming to prevent and reduce the harms of drug use when, regrettably, drug-related problems do occur.

In its second term, the PDPC continued to benefit from the broad skills, experience and dedication of its members. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's second term members, as well as the Secretariat, for the time and work they have contributed toward the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.

The PDPC's strategic priorities for its second term are:

Intelligence gathering – to ensure that drug prevention directions and activities are informed by comprehensive intelligence and evidence-based practice. Strategies related to this priority include undertaking research, evaluation, benchmarking and monitoring activities.

Communications – to promote community awareness in regard to alcohol and drug related issues and how they can be prevented. Major strategies include supporting the DrugInfo Clearinghouse, promoting DirectLine 1800 888 236, supporting ongoing community awareness campaigns, and providing training on drug prevention to workers in health and community services, local government and community workers.

Community drug prevention – involves developing a model to facilitate embedding drug prevention in programs at a community level, addressing similar risk and protective factors and leveraging change at a population level. This will also involve working across government with key departments, Victoria Police, local government, and Department of Human Services program areas.

Advocacy – to provide leadership at a state and national level in relation to drug prevention policy, strategic directions and activities. This includes building links with national research centres and fostering partnerships with relevant agencies in Victoria and other states.

Connectus – PDPC's flagship project, *Connectus*, works with the business community to embed, in a sustainable way, a major employment and mentoring program for young people at risk.

Now nearing the end of its second term, the PDPC has a considerable raft of achievements to boast. The Council has continued to develop and trial innovative drug prevention projects, promote evidence-based drug prevention, and contribute to debate regarding drug prevention policy, research and practice. This Annual Report highlights the PDPC's achievements in 2005–06, including projects that were implemented, developed and evaluated. Of note is the PDPC's substantial research agenda, which will make a significant contribution to drug prevention in the future.

The PDPC looks forward to continuing to invest in and promote evidence-based drug prevention projects.

Dr Rob Moodie
Chair, Premier's Drug Prevention Council

2. About the PDPC

The PDPC was established in May 2001 following a joint sitting of Parliament convened to examine drug issues in Victoria.

The Council was appointed to provide advice to the government on drug prevention, commission new projects to inform the best approach to prevention, and promote prevention in the broader community. The PDPC is currently nearing the conclusion of its second term.

The PDPC's approach to prevention involves a framework based on:

- addressing drug-related issues at an individual, family, community and macro-environmental level
- increasing the community's capacity to address drug-related issues at a local level
- Viewing drug issues in a broad health context.

2.1 Terms of Reference

The PDPC's Terms of Reference for its second term are to:

1. Provide expert advice on effective, evidence-based prevention programs, drawing on international research and best practice, and which are appropriate to the Victorian context.
2. Advise government on where additional primary prevention efforts should be directed.
3. Commission or contribute to research and other projects to inform best practice on prevention.
4. Inform and educate the Victorian community about risk and protective factors associated with drug use and effective drug prevention responses.
5. Engage the business, media and philanthropic sectors to harness and further support drug prevention strategies.



2.2 Membership



Dr Rob Moodie, Chief Executive Officer, VicHealth (Chairperson)

Dr Moodie is Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Editor of the *Australian Health Promotion Journal* and board member of the *Medicins Sans Frontieres*. He has professional appointments in Public Health at Melbourne and Monash universities and is a member of several boards. Dr Moodie is also Vice-President of the International Union of Health Promotion and Education and has recently accepted an invitation to join the Victorian Government's new Liquor Control Advisory Council.



Paul Briggs OAM, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club

Paul Briggs is the President of Rumbalara Football and Netball Club and consultant on Indigenous issues. He is also Convener of the Victorian Aboriginal Leadership Network, Chairman of First Nation Foundation and a member of the University of Melbourne Council.



Neil Comrie AO, APM

As Commissioner of Victoria Police, Neil Comrie led the Delta Taskforce 1982–84 into child exploitation. He is a former member of the Board of Directors of Open Family and has had a strong interest and commitment in drug policy and education for more than 20 years.



Professor Margaret Hamilton AO, Chair, Multiple and Complex Needs Panel

Professor Hamilton is a member of the Prime Minister's National Council on Drugs and the National Expert Advisory Committee on Illicit Drugs, Deputy Chair of the National Expert Advisory Committee on Alcohol, Chair of the Drug Advisory Committee – Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, and Chair of the Royal Women's Hospital Ethics Committee.



Margaret Harding, Magistrate, Drug Court Magistrate, Dandenong Magistrates' Court

Margaret Harding has 14 years experience as a Magistrate, initially assigned to the Children's Court from 1991–96 and then until 1998 to the Civil Division and Crimes Family Violence Division, Melbourne Magistrates' Court. From 1999 to 2002, Margaret was assigned to Dandenong Magistrates' Court and, since 2002, has been assigned to the Drug Court Pilot Program at the Dandenong Magistrates' Court.



Janine Kirk AM, Executive Director, Committee for Melbourne

Janine Kirk is Chair of the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau, immediate Past President of Berry Street Victoria, an advisory board member of the University of Sydney/Australian National University Centre for the Mind Management Board, a board member of the Victorian

Endowment for Science, Technology and Innovation, and a member of the Victoria Harbour Advisory Group.



Frank McGuire, Managing Director, *george*

Frank McGuire is Managing Partner of *george*, a corporate think tank specialising in strategy, communications and advertising. A former journalist, producer and communications advisor, Frank McGuire has been awarded a Walkley Award and a Human Rights Award and was nominated for a United Nations Media Peace Prize.



Phong Nguyen, Director, Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association

Phong Nguyen is President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia – Victorian Chapter, and Director of the Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association. His extensive community involvement includes Westernport Drug and Alcohol Services, Coordinator of South Eastern Region's Indo-Chinese Young Offenders Program, and Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities Council Victoria.



Kay Rundle, Chief Executive Officer, City of Greater Geelong

With 20 years experience in local government, Kay Rundle was the first female to be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer for the City of Greater Geelong, Victoria's second largest city. Greater Geelong is the largest regional local

government organisation in Victoria and administers a budget of \$195 million, with 1,890 staff and 82 business units, to a population of 198,164 people and more than 10,000 businesses.



Bill Stronach, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Drug Foundation

Bill Stronach has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Drug Foundation since 1989. This is Australia's leading non-government organisation concerned with the prevention of drug problems. Prior to this position, he was Director of Grassmere Youth Services, working with juvenile offenders, homeless and sexually abused young people.



Peter Wearne, Manager, Residential Unit and Special Projects, Youth Substance Abuse Service

Peter Wearne is a youth worker with the Youth Substance Abuse Service and Chairperson of the Yarra Drug and Health Forum. Peter has a strong interest in drug treatment and prevention issues.

PDPC meetings are also attended by the Chief Drug Strategy Officer and the Director of the Drugs Policy and Services Branch, Department of Human Services.

3. Intelligence gathering

The year 2005–06 has been important for the PDPC in terms of pursuing its intelligence gathering objectives. Some significant research projects have been developed that will help to ensure drug prevention in Victoria is informed by comprehensive national and international intelligence and evidence-based practice, and that research projects undertaken by the PDPC add value to current drug prevention research and programs. The following intelligence gathering initiatives were developed in 2005–06.

3.1 Drug Prevention Research Action Plan

The PDPC endorsed the development of a Drug Prevention Research Action Plan and an Indigenous Drug Prevention Research Action Plan. The development of these plans will ensure that research undertaken by the PDPC is informed by a strategic framework, building on and adding value to the existing drug prevention evidence base.

The development of this project involved a forum convened by the PDPC, including leading experts in the field of drug prevention, and discussions with members of the Indigenous community. The project is now in its second stage, which will assess the research priorities identified at the forum against a stocktake of drug prevention research gaps identified in the literature.

The Drug Prevention Research Action Plan project will involve:

- an analysis of research needs and gaps identified by drug prevention research published over the past five years in Australia and other comparable jurisdictions (such as UK, US, Canada, NZ)
- the identification of likely future trends and issues pivotal to drug prevention research
- the development of a Drug Prevention Research Action Plan for the PDPC, based on the above analysis.

The Indigenous Drug Prevention Research Action Plan will be informed by:

- a review of drug prevention research published over the past five years and which is relevant to the Victorian Indigenous community
- a series of community consultations in metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria
- likely future trends and issues pivotal to Indigenous drug prevention research.

The first stage of the project is due for completion early in 2007.

3.2 Youth Drug Reporting System

The PDPC commissioned the Centre for Adolescent Health to review the existing drug reporting systems relevant to drug prevention. The resulting report identified the need for data collection systems that incorporated at risk young people and recommended that a new youth drug reporting system be developed to monitor drug use trends and harms in vulnerable youth populations.

In 2005, the PDPC commissioned Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Incorporated, in conjunction with the Youth Substance Abuse Centre and the Key Centre for Women's Health at Melbourne University, to design and develop a survey system to monitor illicit drug use trends and harms in vulnerable at risk youth populations, particularly in the 12–24 year old age group. The survey will be known as the Youth Drug Reporting System (YDRS).

The YDRS aims to address an identified gap in drug monitoring and surveillance among young people and to target groups that other surveys do not currently capture. The YDRS will not provide prevalence estimates but is intended to serve as a strategic early warning system, identifying emerging trends of local concern in at risk youth drug use and related harms, and to complement the existing Illicit Drug Reporting System.

The YDRS project will involve a two-year study with data collected annually. The purpose of the YDRS is to:

- monitor drug use trends and harms in vulnerable, hard to reach youth populations
- better target those at risk youth sub-populations that existing drug monitoring systems don't adequately capture (such as homeless youth)
- provide qualitative accounts of new trends and patterns in specific geographic areas and sub-populations
- examine developmental pathways resulting in harmful drug use by at-risk populations.

It is anticipated that the fieldwork component of this project will commence in September 2006.

3.3 Understanding the social and cultural context of ecstasy and related drugs

In 2004, the Victorian Youth Alcohol and Drug Survey revealed increasing rates of both lifetime and recent ecstasy use among younger age groups. The survey also found that 60 per cent of survey respondents reported the use of ecstasy amongst their peers. While traditionally used in the dance and rave scene, recent studies into ecstasy and related drug (ERD) use show that it is now being used beyond these venues and is more apparent in settings such as clubs, bars and people's homes.

According to the *Victorian Party Drug Trends Study 2004*, regular ecstasy users are likely to be educated, employed or in tertiary education, are unlikely to have criminal convictions, are polydrug users, and are aged in their mid-twenties.

To better understand the changing nature of ERD use and to inform the development of drug prevention approaches relevant to those who use ERDs, the PDPC commissioned The Centre for Youth Drug Studies (Australian Drug Foundation), in collaboration with Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Incorporated and the National Drug Research Institute in Perth, to examine the social and cultural context of ERD use.

The study involved:

- a review of the relevant literature regarding the culture and context of ERD use in Australia
- an examination of the patterns of ERD use, including setting of use, with whom use occurs, time and frequency of use, the profile and social networks of people who use ERDs, and how this changes over time and varies according to age and gender
- an analysis of the social and cultural context of ERD users, including the role and function ERDs play in people's lives and how this changes over time and according to age and gender
- a description of consumers' perceived future patterns of ERD use, including alcohol and other drugs
- the identification of harms that consumers associate with ERD use and the strategies they employ to reduce or manage those harms
- the development of recommendations about prevention approaches, including when and where these approaches would be most appropriate, and recommendations for further research.

The study provides valuable insights into the context of ERD use and the importance of peer and Web-based communications for informing users of ERD-related harms. The research will inform future prevention and harm minimisation messages regarding ERDs. The report of the study is due for release in late 2006.

3.4 Travelling Fellowship

In 2004, the PDPC established a Drug Prevention Travelling Fellowship award program. The purpose of the award is to advance the Council's primary aim of preventing alcohol and drug related harm through the investigation of international models of best practice in drug prevention. The program consists of awarding a scholarship to the value of \$15,000 to individuals wishing to build on the evidence base around drug prevention interventions. The program also enhances Victoria's workforce capacity and provides leadership in drug prevention.

The 2005–06 Travelling Fellowship was awarded to Craig Fry, a Senior Research Fellow of the Epidemiology and Surveillance Program at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre for his project 'Examining international innovations for enhanced youth drug surveillance research in Victoria'.

With the support of the PDPC Travelling Fellowship, Craig Fry completed a six-week period of international scholarship and network building to investigate recent innovations in the area of youth drug trend surveillance research, and considered how



Rob Moodie presents the Travelling Fellowship 2005–06 to Craig Fry

these might be applied to enhance similar activities in Victoria.

Underpinning the Fellowship program was a focus on developing new responses to the considerable process and methodological challenges that exist in the design and conduct of illicit drug surveillance research. Some of the issues that Craig examined during the six-week program included:

- access and recruitment of 'hidden' populations to illicit drug research
- sensitivity and reliability considerations in observation and reporting of new drug 'trends'
- the utility of mixed methods in surveillance research where issues of scope, resources, precision and timeliness must be balanced

- where to find early indicator data sources suitable for tracking emerging youth drug trends
- how drug trend surveillance research can contribute to prevention.

The knowledge gathered from Craig's Fellowship program will be applied locally in a number of ways. A PDPC Fellowship Report is currently being prepared and a series of collaborative articles is planned with local and international partners to further develop ideas from this work. A number of public presentations are also planned to report on the outcomes of 2006 PDPC Travelling Fellowship, and contribute to current thinking and practice around the issues in focus. As Principal Investigator of the newly commenced Youth Drug Reporting System (2006–08) project, Craig is also examining how his PDPC Fellowship work may contribute to the conduct of this important project.

3.5 DirectLine

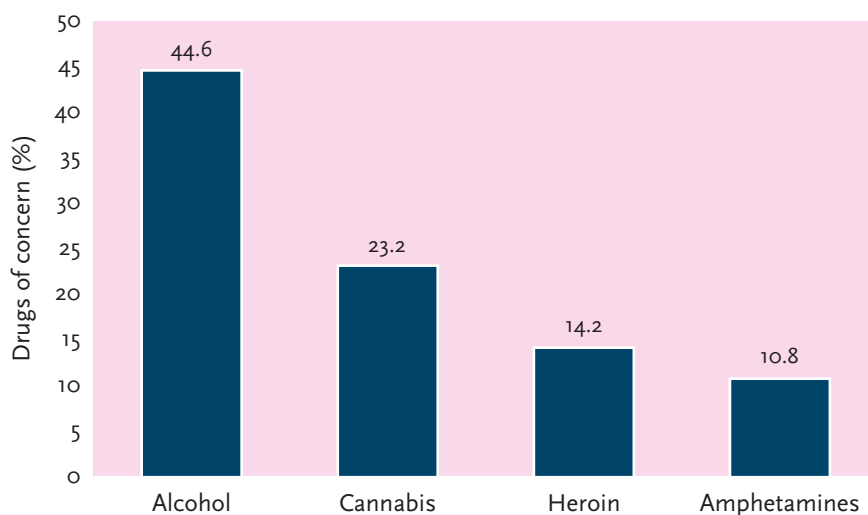
To ensure that Victorians know where to get help for alcohol and drug issues when they occur, the PDPC provides support to DirectLine.

DirectLine is the central 24-hour, seven-day-a-week telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone in Victoria with an alcohol or drug related concern. Staffed by professional counsellors at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Incorporated, it is an important part of the alcohol and other drug treatment service system.

The helpline model is designed to provide timely, accessible and flexible responses to the diverse needs of callers seeking assistance. In addition to its counselling and support role, DirectLine has an important role in educating and assisting callers to access treatment and support services in the local community.

In 2005–06, DirectLine received more than 52,000 calls from drug users, relatives of drug users, and others affected by the use of drugs in the community. Continuing the trend over recent years, in 2005–06 problems involving alcohol and cannabis were most frequently reported by both drug users and concerned family members. Calls regarding amphetamines, ecstasy and related drugs and 'ice' have also begun to rise compared with previous years.

Calls to DirectLine 2005–06



Only a small amount of research has been undertaken regarding alcohol and drug helplines, and we know little about the role of DirectLine in the treatment pathway of substance users.

In 2005, the PDPC funded two studies to investigate the help-seeking behaviour of substance users accessing the DirectLine service in Victoria. The studies aimed to enhance knowledge of service use and consumer profiles in the alcohol and drug telephone counselling and referral system.

- Study 1 was designed to assess the role of DirectLine in the treatment pathway of substance users as part of their overall alcohol or other drug help-seeking behaviour. This included the use of telephone and face-to-face treatment.

- Study 2 was designed to examine the referral function of DirectLine, by determining the total uptake of referrals among callers who use licit and illicit substances. Other factors, such as sex, relationship status and employment status, which are believed to affect treatment entry, were also examined.

Both studies provided information that more completely describes the individuals who use alcohol and drug telephone services. The studies will inform the Victorian alcohol and drug service system.

4. Community drug prevention

Working from a social health perspective, the PDPC approaches drug-related issues at an individual, family, community and macro-environmental level. This involves embedding drug prevention at a community level, addressing risk and protective factors, and increasing the community's capacity to address drug-related issues at a local level.

4.1 Drug prevention tool kit

In 2005–06, the PDPC worked towards completing a new resource guide for local communities to assist them in planning and implementing drug prevention efforts. This guide was prepared by Associate Professor John Toumbourou, who is based at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, is a VicHealth Senior Research Fellow, and is also Chief Executive Officer Communities That Care, Australia.

In developing the resource, published evaluations of drug prevention interventions were sought from the international literature using a systematic review framework. The interventions recommended in the resource guide are those that show good evidence for preventing alcohol and/or drug related harm, or for reducing associated influencing factors.

The *Drug prevention tool kit* has been designed to coordinate with Victoria's integrated health promotion planning framework and so links with the closely related area of tobacco prevention. The recommended community focus of drug prevention plans in the resource

guide is, in most cases, a geographically (place) defined area such as a local government municipality or a sub-population using a service such as a school or housing estate. In other cases, smaller geographic localities or statewide communities based on common identity, culture or social networks are suggested as the focus of prevention planning.

The resource guide has four main components:

1. A guide to evidence-based strategies to prevent drug related harm.
2. A guide to integrating with existing systems to build effective prevention partnerships.
3. A guide to assessing community characteristics relevant to drug and alcohol related harm.
4. A guide to developing community drug prevention plans that can be monitored and evaluated.

Dissemination of the resource guide to local communities throughout Victoria will commence in 2006–07 and will be accompanied by a short training course focusing on drug prevention capacity building at the local level.

4.2 Healthy babies, healthy pregnancies

As part of the Koori Alcohol and Drug Plan 2003–04, developed by the Koori Drug Strategy Advisory Committee, a consortium led by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) was commissioned to undertake research on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. As part of this work VACCHO, in consultation with the Koori Community in general and health workers in particular, has developed a resource on healthy babies and healthy pregnancies.

The *Healthy babies, healthy pregnancies* resource, comprising a flip chart, poster and pamphlet, has been developed for use by Indigenous health and community workers. The resource is a tool for informing families and the community about how to ensure healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. Among other things, the resource explains the relationship between the intake of food, alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy and the health of the foetus. The underpinning message is that healthy pregnancies and healthy babies are the responsibility of the whole community.

4.3 Local solutions to public drug use

In 2006, the PDPC commissioned The Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health Ltd to investigate local solutions to public drug use in Victoria.

In recent times a combination of factors has driven sporadic changes to the prevalence of public drug use in many Victorian localities. These factors appear to include more mobile drug dealing, the breaking up and displacement of local drug markets by police operations, and fluctuations in the supply of heroin and other drugs.

Injecting in public places poses risks for individual injecting drug users and the wider community. This necessitates responses to minimise these risks, particularly the risk of blood borne virus transmission, overdose, and the public nuisance created by drug affected people. Local solutions are considered to be a one of the most effective ways of addressing these issues.

The Local Solutions to Public Drug Use research project will assess ongoing community concern about public drug use and propose local solutions to address those concerns within the existing service, treatment and resource parameters. Specifically, the project will:

- collect and analyse existing research reports relating to public drug use and compile and analyse current data sets relating to public drug use in Victoria
- identify examples of best practice in local solutions to public drug use in Victoria, nationally and internationally
- gather knowledge and views of key local stakeholders and other experts regarding the impact of public drug use in Victoria
- make recommendations for opportunities for system enhancements within existing infrastructure and with a continuing emphasis on harm minimisation.

5. Communication

Communication is an important tool of the PDPC in promoting community awareness in regard to alcohol and drug related issues and how they can be prevented. Two major communication initiatives were undertaken in 2005–06.

5.1 Schoolies Week

Schoolies Week continues to be a popular post-exams celebration for Victorian school leavers. Three Victorian shires—Bass Coast Shire, Mornington Peninsula Shire and Surf Coast Shire—attract hundreds of young people to Schoolies Week annually and a significant number of young Victorians travel interstate to Queensland and NSW to participate in Schoolies Week. In the course of these celebrations, some young people will find themselves in risky situations or partaking in risky behaviours, often involving alcohol and other drugs.

For the last three years, the PDPC has funded a range of strategies in response to community concerns about the risky behaviours of young people during Schoolies Week, including information provision to students and their parents, advertising, and assisting local communities to manage the event and provide support to young people.

In June 2005, the PDPC convened an interstate forum to discuss and share successful strategies to manage and minimise the harms associated with Schoolies Week events in Victoria. A key outcome of the forum was agreement that an ongoing coordinated approach to Schoolies Week in Victoria would be undertaken through the Schoolies Week Inter-agency Steering Committee (SWISC).

The PDPC is the lead coordinator of SWISC, which comprises key state and local government agencies, with the Office for Youth facilitating input from young people. Local Councils and SWISC members made tremendous efforts to ensure Schoolies Week 2005 was a safe and enjoyable occasion for participants, as well as local communities.



Schoolies Week 2005 awards

The SWISC has commenced planning for Schoolies Week 2006. Initiatives for 2006 comprise a set of key initiatives that will ensure Schoolies Week in Victoria is again a safe and successful event. The initiatives aim to:

- provide detailed and timely information to Year 12 students planning to participate in Schoolies Week 2006
- provide accurate and accessible information to influencers and parents
- engage the media in a coordinated way across Victorian Schoolies Week sites
- support Bass Coast, Surf Coast and Mornington Peninsula shires in their support to local businesses and residents
- gather intelligence to identify what works and what doesn't, for future Schoolies Week preparation and management.

5.2 DrugInfo Clearinghouse

The DrugInfo Clearinghouse, located within the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF), continues to be one of the PDPC's major communication initiatives. The Clearinghouse was established by the PDPC in 2002 to facilitate the collection, collation, interpretation and dissemination of evidence-based drug prevention information. Now with 4,000 plus members, demand for Clearinghouse services continues to grow and, with this, enhanced community understanding of prevention as a concept and as a priority in drug and alcohol harm reduction policy and program initiatives and planning.

The Clearinghouse is an integrated service, comprising a Resource Centre, website, publications, including the quarterly produced *Prevention Research Evaluation Report*, the 'DrugInfo' newsletter and fact sheets, and the library, which is open to all Victorians working in the fields of education, health, policy and other fields related to drug prevention.

In 2005–06, the Clearinghouse provided direct services (face to face/phone) to 12,500 people. The most regular users were workers in the alcohol and drug sector, followed by other allied health workers and teachers. Drug users comprised between 2–7 per cent of service users each month.

In 2005–06, visits to the Clearinghouse website increased substantially. With an average 54,000 hits per month and 650,000 annually, hits to the website have more than doubled those of 2004–05, which averaged 26,000 per month and 312,000 annually.

The Resource Centre Infodesk on average continues to receive more than 1,000 information requests per month. Most requests have been from people working in the drug or health related fields, with significant numbers of teachers, government workers, students and law enforcement professionals also making contact.

In June 2006, the Clearinghouse library announced the launch of an online journal service for DrugInfo library members, allowing members to log in and access a variety of the best academic and health journals on drugs and drug prevention online.

In 2005–06, the Clearinghouse publishing team researched and published newsletters, research reports and fact sheets on *Social marketing* (November 2005) and *Peer education and prevention* (March 2006) and *Newly arrived refugees and prevention* (June 2006). Clearinghouse quarterly seminars have been well attended, with 80 to 120 people at each.

Review of the DrugInfo Clearinghouse

In 2005, the PDPC recommended that a review of the DrugInfo Clearinghouse be undertaken to assess its effectiveness in meeting its objectives, and to make recommendations about its future directions. This review is the first external review of the Clearinghouse and was undertaken by an independent expert panel.

Completed in 2006, the expert review panel provided recommendations to enhance an already highly valuable service, and gave an overall positive review, stating that:

The DrugInfo Clearinghouse is a unique service offering professionals, families and the community an opportunity to access alcohol and drug prevention information in a number of important and innovative ways. It is staffed by a group of committed people who are conscious of the need to be flexible about the changing environment in which they work. It is housed within an organisation that has long had one of the most respected reputations within the community-based drug and alcohol service sector.

That it should continue is self-evident. As was abundantly demonstrated to the panel, this is a unique service, and the people of Victoria are fortunate in having a state government sufficiently foresighted to fund drug and alcohol prevention information. Capacity exists for considerable growth, but the resources to fund such growth may not be available. Given financial constraints, reassessment of the size and scope of the project is essential.

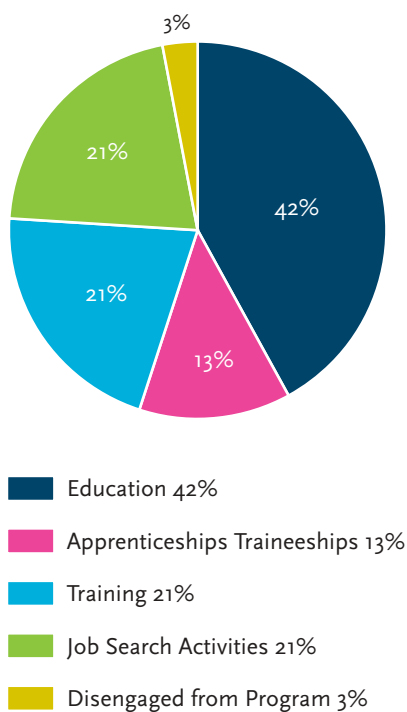
Recommendations within this report are directed only towards improving what is already a highly valued and productive organisation.

6. *Connectus*

Connectus is the PDPC's flagship project for its second term, working with the business community to embed, in a sustainable way, a major employment and mentoring program for young people at risk.

Connectus is an innovative skills development program that supports young people aged 16–20 years who are at risk to access a range of employment, education and training pathways. In 2005, Connectus delivered four projects in communities experiencing low school retention, high youth unemployment and skills shortages. Since 2005, Connectus has delivered six projects in communities experiencing low school retention, high youth unemployment and skills shortages. These projects were located in Hobsons Bay, Brimbank, Melton, Darebin, Hume and Greater Dandenong. The outcomes to date are pictured below, translating into 76% of the participants transitioning into education, employment or training pathways.

Connectus participant pathways July 2006



These positive outcomes have been the result of the effort made to work collaboratively with key stakeholders in each of the local communities, in particular: the Brimbank Melton, Inner North and South East Local Learning Employment Networks (LLENs); youth and community agencies; schools and Neighbourhood Renewal projects. Furthermore, the delivery of the program by *Connectus* staff as opposed to an external contractor has meant that *Connectus* staff have been able to develop stronger relationships with young people resulting in the ability to support them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

In addition to this, *Connectus* contracted Victoria University, under the supervision of Dr Robyn Broadbent, to map existing and similar projects and evaluate the *Connectus* model over a 12 month period concluding in September 2006. Some of the recommendations from their work to date include:

- clarification via an extensive mapping exercise that *Connectus* is unique and exists within a maze of short term programs that young people cannot negotiate without adequate support
- diversity of young people and their individual employment needs means that *Connectus* cannot be owned by business, the community or education sectors on their own
- the model is best suited to be coordinated from local areas to ensure strong links with local schools, agencies and business.

Phase 3 of *Connectus* commenced in January 2006 with the aim of delivering four projects throughout the year—two in the transport industry in the west and two in the construction industry in the south-east. The objective of this strategy is to provide young people with job opportunities in skill shortage industries in these regions, which experience high youth unemployment and low school retention.

Other achievements for 2005–06 include securing funding from the Department for Victorian Communities' Workforce Participation Grant Scheme, which will be used to work with Link and Workplace Connect (group training companies) to assist with the provision of individual support and placement of the young people into apprenticeships or traineeships. In addition, a 12 minute video has been produced showing the interventions that the *Connectus* program uses to engage and support young people. This video will be used as a training and promotion tool for business, schools and agencies interested in referring young people, recruiting a young person or delivering the program in the future.

Connectus will continue to work with key stakeholders from government, the community and education sectors to develop and finetune the model. The PDPC will investigate options to determine the best outcomes for the program's future when the pilot period concludes in 2007.

7. Advocacy

7.1 The Community Alcohol Action Network's *Grogwatch*

In 2005–06, the PDPC funded the Community Alcohol Action Network's (CAAN) weekly e-bulletin, *Grogwatch*, supporting CAAN's important role in awareness raising, advocacy and monitoring with regard to alcohol promotion and policy.

Alcohol is the second highest cause of death and hospitalisation in Australia and research indicates that alcohol advertising has a powerful influence on our attitudes toward, and consumption of, alcohol.

The CAAN was established by the ADF in 2003 in response to concerns about Australia's culture of high risk drinking, and the ways in which alcohol is marketed and supplied in the community. CAAN aims to achieve a long-term change in alcohol-related attitudes and behaviour by increasing awareness of the tolerance for unsafe drinking in Australia, advocating for policy change, and promoting action by community members at the local level.

CAAN's objectives are:

- to highlight the role of alcohol in causing problems of health and safety
- to challenge aggressive marketing and supply of alcohol
- to build a network of active supporters
- to encourage community members to take action to reduce problems
- to encourage policy development in line with CAAN's objectives.

With more than 2,000 subscribers, *GrogWatch* is a fundamental tool for CAAN in communicating regularly with its subscribers and supporters. *GrogWatch* raises awareness of alcohol issues, particularly the marketing and supply of alcohol, calls for readers to support community and advocacy campaigns, and plays a role in monitoring the industry. *GrogWatch* also provides links and support for people working to prevent alcohol problems.

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's Report on the *Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption* noted that the Committee had been 'impressed with the advocacy work done by CAAN and its efforts to raise awareness with regard to alcohol-related issues in conjunction with the Australian Drug Foundation'. The Committee recommended that 'The Victorian Government investigate ongoing support of the Community Alcohol Action Network'.

Appendices



Appendix 1 – PDPC Secretariat

The PDPC Secretariat has five staff who provide valuable support to the Council, develops and implements Council initiatives, and provides support to Council meetings. This work includes research, designing, managing and monitoring projects, supporting advisory groups, making recommendations and implementing communications strategies.

Members of the Secretariat are:

Estelle O’Callaghan
Manager (May 2006)

Brian Vandenberg
Senior Policy Officer (November 2005)

Diane Edwards
Senior Research Analyst

Karene Fairbairn
Senior Communications Officer
(March 2006)

Melanie Nel
Office Manager

Previous members of the Secretariat included:

Nadja Diesel
Manager (to February 2006)

Ange Lajoie
Senior Project Officer (to October 2005)

Jann Milic
Senior Project Officer (to September 2005)

Appendix 2 – PDPC Financial Statement 2005–06

Expenses	Expenditure
Secretariat costs	\$380,162.00
Operating costs	\$328,211.00
Externally purchased services	\$1,311,598.00
Total operating expenses	\$2,019,970.00

