



## THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP

### Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing

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#### **Youth smoking, drug use down, but no room for complacency**

Cannabis and tobacco use continued to decline among young Australians but there was still room for improvement, particularly regarding alcohol use, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, said today.

“The latest survey results show some satisfying trends, but alcohol misuse is still a concern,” Mr Pyne said when issuing the three reports of the eighth triennial Australian Secondary Students’ Use of Alcohol and Drugs Survey.

The illicit drug report shows that cannabis use among Australian secondary school students declined from 35 per cent in 1996 to 18 per cent in 2005.

Similarly, smoking was found to have declined across all ages. In 2005, 7 per cent of 12- to 15-year-old students had smoked in the week before the survey, compared with 15 per cent in 1999.

Mr Pyne said it was still a concern that so many students smoked, despite substantial decreases in the proportion of young smokers.

“Youth smoking is an issue at the forefront of the public health agenda, and that is why, as part of the 2005-2006 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$25 million over four years to a National Tobacco Campaign focusing on young people,” he said.

“Preventing adolescents from becoming regular users of tobacco is an important goal of tobacco control programs in Australia.”

The report showed that the proportion of 16- and 17-year-old students smoking in the week before the survey had dropped from 30 per cent in 1999 to 17 per cent in 2005.

Mr Pyne said it was pleasing to see there was also a downward trend in cannabis use.

“For example, in the 12- to 15-year-old age group, cannabis use in the past month declined from 15 per cent of the age group in 1996 to 6 per cent in 2005; and in the 16- to 17-year-old age group, there was a drop from 27 per cent in 1996 to 12 per cent in 2005,” he said.

“This is an extraordinary vindication of the Government’s *Tough on Drugs* program.

“The Australian Government is committed to keeping young people informed about the harms of illicit drug use,” he said.

“The 2006 Federal Budget allocated \$23.7 million to the third phase of the National Illicit Drugs Campaign that will further increase awareness of the harm associated with cannabis and psychostimulant use, particularly among young people.”

However, alcohol use by young people remained a problem.

“The report on alcohol use shows that drinking by students at levels where there is a risk of short-term harm has not changed significantly since the 2002 survey,” Mr Pyne said.

“However, about 21 per cent of 12- to 15-year-olds, and 42 per cent of 16- to 17-year-olds continue to drink at levels which put them at risk of harming their health in the short term. Apart from the health and other problems this underage drinking presents, we also ought to be concerned about the supply of alcohol to these young people.”

To counter this, the Government has allocated \$25 million over four years from 2006-07 to conduct a national alcohol education and information campaign and update the Australian Alcohol Guidelines.

The survey reports can be found at

<http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/publications-monographs>

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