

Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum Communiqué

14 June 2018

The fourth meeting of the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum (the Forum) took place via teleconference today.

The Forum consists of Ministers from across Australia with responsibility for alcohol and other drug policy from the health and justice / law enforcement portfolios from each jurisdiction.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP and the Commonwealth Minister for Law Enforcement and Cyber Security, the Hon Angus Taylor MP.

Major items discussed by Ministers included:

The National Alcohol Strategy (NAS)

Ministers discussed the findings from the public consultation process undertaken earlier this year, which saw more than 100 submissions received from a range of stakeholders across the country. The submissions received through this process will be published on the MDAF website (where the author has consented to allow this).

Ministers noted that the consultation process had highlighted several issues that had been raised where further consideration was required. Further consultation is to take place through a roundtable to discuss the issues and make suggestions on areas for consideration by the Forum. The roundtable will feature a diverse range of stakeholders representing key sectors.

The Forum confirmed their commitment to finalising the NAS by the end of 2018.

Development of a National Quality Framework for Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (National Quality Framework)

Ministers endorsed the National Quality Framework. This was a key action of the National Ice Action Strategy (NIAS) agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in December 2015.

The implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) requires cooperation between the Commonwealth and jurisdictional health agencies. Arrangements for the NQF include:

- Government funded treatment service providers will be required to comply with the NQF, through contractual and/or jurisdictional arrangements.
- Providers not receiving government funding will be required to meet the NQF through regulatory or other processes as determined by jurisdictions as appropriate.

The Commonwealth confirmed that under the NQF the regulation of providers who do not receive government funding remains with the states and territories.

Ministers noted that the National Drug Strategy Committee (NDSC) would update a national treatment service directory to complement the National Quality Framework to assist those seeking help, their friends and their families to make informed choices about accessing quality alcohol and other drug treatment services.

Other Items of Interest

Following a recommendation from the NDSC an Opioid Issues Working Group will be established. The Working Group will report to the Forum through the NDSC, guided by Terms of Reference developed by the NDSC. The first issue to be examined by the Working Group was the issue of access and availability of Naloxone in Australia.

The Forum noted the progress on the development of the National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan ('the Plan'). The Plan is intended to provide a cohesive, evidence-based approach to strengthen Australia's efforts in preventing and diagnosing FASD and better supporting those living with, and affected by, the disorder. Ministers noted the intention for the NDSC to bring forward a final draft of the Plan for out-of-session consideration in the second half of the year.

The National Drug Strategy requires MDAF to provide COAG with an annual report on the progress being made against our national alcohol and other drug policy frameworks. The Forum noted that the NDSC had commenced work on the development of the National Drug Strategy Reporting Framework, which would incorporate reporting on all accompanying sub-strategies. Ministers indicated they were looking forward to receiving further advice on the reporting framework and the inaugural National Drug Strategy annual report later this year.

The Forum noted the progress being made by the NDSC around the development of the National Treatment Framework (another commitment under the NIAS). It is intended that the development of the Treatment Framework will involve an extensive stakeholder consultation process involving interviews, focus groups and potentially an opportunity to provide written submissions, with the final Framework expected to be provided to the Forum in early 2019.

The next meeting of the Forum is expected to take place in December 2018.

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