



Hon. Alison Xamon MLC  
Chair  
Select Committee into Alternative Approaches to  
Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the  
Community  
Legislative Council Committee Office  
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Dear Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Select Committee on 15 April 2019. I am writing to clarify two specific points that were raised at WANADA's hearing.

1. Where sections of the WANADA submission were read by the Select Committee during the hearing the references were unable to be acknowledged. WANADA collated and referenced information from reputable public sources including government departments, recognised academic experts in the alcohol and other drug field, and other government inquiries to support its submission. WANADA would encourage the Select Committee to explore the sources WANADA drew from, as well as other relevant contemporary data and evidence.
2. A significant proportion of questions to WANADA during the hearing were focused on decriminalisation/diversion. To be clear, WANADA does not see drug diversion programs as a barrier to service access. There have, however, been inquiries that have raised questions as to whether diversion programs across Australia are suitably optimised. For example, a National Ice Action Strategy action is to:

*Conduct a national review of drug diversionary programmes to inform best practice approaches and options for improving and expanding existing arrangements.<sup>i</sup>*

Problematic substance use is identified as one of three factors most strongly linked to recidivism.<sup>ii</sup> Given that diversion, as a de-facto form of decriminalisation, seeks to 'direct offenders into activities that will benefit both the offender and the community and reduce incidence of reoffending'<sup>iii</sup>, it is WANADA's position that Western Australia's diversion program be reviewed to ensure optimised access to appropriate treatment and support.

A key consideration in this context is, however, that there are currently insufficient specialist alcohol and other drug treatment and support services available to meet voluntary or coerced demand.

A range of issues co-occur with illicit drug use, including interactions with the justice system. These co-occurring issues do not, however, negate the essence of the issue: *'drug dependence is not a crime, it is a treatable health problem'*.<sup>iv</sup>

It is for this reason that WANADA's position is that:

- drug dependence must be considered a population health issue;
- there must be adequate treatment and support services to meet demand;
- all sectors must support improved pathways to specialist alcohol and other drug treatment and support; and
- political leadership is required to address barriers to the implementation of evidence-based, health-driven initiatives. In particular the prevalence of stigma and discrimination, as a barrier, needs to be addressed as a priority, including through increased community awareness.

Kind regards



Jill Rundle  
CEO  
WANADA  
18 April 2019

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<sup>i</sup> National Ice Action Strategy (2015), p.25.

<sup>ii</sup> Officer of the Inspector of Custodial Services, Recidivism Rates and the Impact of Treatment Programs (2014), p.i.

<sup>iii</sup> National Ice Taskforce Final Report (2015), p.62.

<sup>iv</sup> Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce Final Report 2018, p.9.