

## **Response to the National Amphetamine-Type Stimulants Strategy Consultation Paper**

**April 2007**

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ACON has always recognised and responded to the very real and significant need for programs that reduce the harms associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs within our communities. However, changing drug trends and increased need led us in 2006, to establish our first designated Alcohol and Other Drugs Program, (AODP). This has enabled us to better position ACON as the lead GLBT health organisation to respond to the use of alcohol and other drugs within our community.

### **KEY ISSUES:**

ACON recognises the important of a National coordinated approach to addressing ATS use. The proposed focus on supply, demand and harm reduction is also supported. ACON supports a harm reduction approach to addressing individual drug use.

As evidenced in our background paper ACON has undertaken significant work in addressing drug use for our communities. The research clearly identifies Gay and Lesbian people have higher rates of drug use than the general population. There are varying reasons as to why this is the case. Historically the GLBT community has met within bars and clubs which can be conducive to the use of alcohol and illicit drugs. In addition, these substances may play a pivotal role in self and community management of discrimination and oppression.

For this reason we recommend that these populations are explicitly identified as target groups in the strategy. It should be noted that this has occurred in the NSW Health *Amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine: A prevention and treatment plan 2005-09* and it is suggested that this is also reflected in the National Framework.

Additionally, it is recommended that any funding arising for initiatives should include allocation for approaches that specifically target GLBT people and any programs should be developed with community based organisations.

ACON has recently worked with NSW Health to adapt social marketing campaign resources, targeting crystal and GBH use, for our communities. The result of was the production of culturally appropriate posters targeting lesbians that use crystal methamphetamine and GHB overdoses in the home environment.

It remains important that all alcohol and other drugs service providers continue to recognise their role in providing an appropriate mix of clinical services and health promotion programs to priority population groups, including GLBT and PLWHA communities.

Work undertaken by ACON has illustrated that many people within our communities face significant barriers in accessing drug treatment. Homophobia and lack of cultural awareness are still reported by members of our communities when they are seeking assistance for drug problems.

For this reason provisions should be made to build the capacity of GLBT and HIV health providers to provide services for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. Additionally work should be undertaken to address homophobia in mainstream services, with a requirement that all services in receipt of government funding should be required to demonstrate cultural competencies in working with GLBT and HIV positive people.

As outlined in the attached background paper ACON has extensive experience in the development of approaches for our communities and in working with government and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Commonwealth on any approaches that target our community.