

11. Initiatives

This chapter discusses a variety of initiatives that have been reported to the Bureau by other agencies. The focus is on law-enforcement initiatives, but other drug-related initiatives are also discussed. The discussion is by no means exhaustive: only information provided to the Bureau at the time of writing is included.

The multi-agency supply-reduction approach

Western Australia

In the second half of 1997 the National Crime Authority, the Australian Customs Service, the Australian Federal Police and the Western Australia Police Service entered into an arrangement to form a Joint Intelligence Group, to assist in reducing the supply of heroin into and within Australia.

The Joint Intelligence Group recognises that supply reduction initiatives—whilst an essential component of overall national strategies—cannot work in isolation from demand-reduction and harm-minimisation initiatives. Accordingly, the Group delivers a collaborative law-enforcement agency intelligence probe into heroin importation and distribution in order to provide a reference tool for the partner agencies in ‘stand-alone’, bilateral or multilateral investigations. The primary outcome was an assessment of the risks specific to Western Australia and the identification of potential targets and strategies for the future.

Operation Alliance

Information gathered by the Joint Intelligence Group suggests that the level of heroin use in Western Australia is high, yet only 1.8 kilograms of the drug was seized in 1996–97. One proposal put forward was for a joint operation to target all ports and areas of entry used by heroin distributors in the State.

Areas such as Perth International Airport, train stations, mail exchanges and shipping ports were targeted by a joint operations group. The purpose was to publicly demonstrate a combined approach by the Joint Intelligence Group partners in their efforts to disrupt the flow of heroin into Western Australia. Western Australia Police developed the operational orders and coordinated the law-enforcement agencies’ activities.

The first phase of Operation Alliance, conducted over five days in November 1997, involved 286 personnel from the partner agencies. In addition to numerous cargo and other searches, 611 items of baggage were X-rayed, 68 people were subject to searches at Perth International Airport and the domestic airport, three ships and 12 aeroplanes were searched, and 724 vehicles and trucks were stopped. Thirty-one people were charged with a variety of offences, including some minor drug matters. Operation Alliance received widespread media coverage and a positive public response.

Operation Pipeline

Operation Pipeline involved refining Operation Alliance and refocusing on its outcomes; it is a good example of intelligence-based targeting. The main strategy was to target individuals at the Perth domestic air terminal, using passenger manifests as a primary intelligence source. The Australian Customs Service is a leader in the area of drug detection and investigation at international airports and its techniques and procedures were used at the domestic level. Targets, chosen on the basis of intelligence or an intelligence-derived profile, were intercepted and searched and their baggage was examined using X-ray machines, ion scanning and drug detector dogs.

Operation Pipeline resulted in the arrest of 50 people, who were charged with a variety of offences, among them drug offences. A number of different drug types were seized: the most significant result was the arrest of two males in possession of 3000 ecstasy tablets and 28 grams of heroin at Perth’s domestic airport.

Approximately 6250 people in Western Australia are dependent on heroin.¹ Estimated annual heroin use for this group is 530 kilograms in the impure, street-level state. The formation of the Joint Intelligence Group is a positive step by law-enforcement agencies in countering heroin importation into Western Australia.

New South Wales

Strikeforce Goldbeck

In late-1997 the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Customs Service detected the importation of 5 kilograms of pure heroin by mail to addresses in the Newcastle–Hunter region. No one was arrested, but intelligence suggested that a number of Vietnamese people were distributing large amounts of heroin in the region.

On 25 February 1998 Strikeforce Goldbeck began under the coordination of the New South Wales Police Service, Hunter Region. The mission was as follows:



- gather and analyse intelligence on Asian involvement in heroin distribution in the Hunter region;
- identify and target principals;
- gather evidence in a professional and ethical manner to support appropriate charges;
- disseminate intelligence holdings to internal and external law-enforcement agencies.

For efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the New South Wales Police Service, New South Wales Crime Agencies, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Customs Service and the New South Wales Crime Commission were asked for assistance. The Hunter Region commander signed a New South Wales Police – Commonwealth operation agreement between the New South Wales Police Service, the Australian Federal Police and Customs; this enabled the free flow of intelligence and access to facilities and funding, which enhanced the operation's effectiveness.

The Strikeforce's results were outstanding: 22 people were arrested for a total of 60 charges. Five of the main targets of the operation were charged with the offence of 'Knowingly take part in the supply of a large commercial quantity of heroin'—it was alleged that over a three-month period they supplied 3.5 kilograms of heroin valued at \$5.2 million dollars. The New South Wales Crime Commission restrained millions of dollars' worth of property such as trawlers, houses, cars, money and jewellery. The search warrant phase also delivered valuable information to the Australian Federal Police, Customs, the Australian Taxation Office and the Crime Commission.

Strikeforce Goldbeck has broken a multi-million dollar Asian heroin-supplying syndicate that had been operating in the Newcastle–Hunter region for a number of years.

South Australia Police

Viking Joint Task Force

South Australia Police, along with Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the National Crime Authority (NCA), identified a significant problem with the investigation of South East Asian Organised Crime, especially in the heroin trade area. An intelligence probe was conducted and as a result Joint Task Force Viking was raised. Other agencies such as Australian Customs Service (ACS), Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and Immigration have also become involved in what can be described as a very successful task force. Examples of successful operations conducted during the reporting period include *Operation Hyde* and *Operation Dekko*.

Operation Hyde was initiated as a result of two suspected 14 kilogram heroin importations through Adelaide to the eastern states. Initial investigations identified South East Asians residing in Sydney as the probable recipients of the heroin; possible identities of the Adelaide end of the importation and methods used to import the product. Australian Customs Service was advised and checks of likely cargo were conducted.

In November 1997, 13.6 kilograms of heroin was located inside five marble pillars addressed to a South East Asian student residing in Adelaide. Over a four day period a controlled delivery, using the resources of South Australia Police, AFP, NCA, and ACS was conducted, resulting in the arrest of nine South East Asians in Sydney and Adelaide. All except two have been convicted for importations offences, receiving substantial imprisonment sentences.

Operation Dekko was a multi jurisdictional investigation involving the conveyance of commercial quantities of heroin from New South Wales and Victoria to South Australia and the subsequent distribution and sale of heroin in South Australia. The operation was conducted over a five month period commencing in September 1997 and involved the NCA, South Australia Police, AFP, ATO and ACS.

The operation culminated with the arrests in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide of ten South East Asians for conspiracy to sell heroin and a further two for possess heroin for sale. In all 1.86 kilograms of heroin was seized during the operation, along with asset seizures of property (\$410 000), cash (\$300 000), vehicles (\$136 000), electrical equipment (\$20 000) and jewellery (\$29 000) totaling over \$894 000.

Other initiatives

Drug Use Monitoring in Australia

Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) is a pilot project that seeks to measure drug use among people who have been charged with a criminal offence. The project is funded under the National Illicit Drug Strategy. Data from the project will be used to examine questions such as the relationship between drugs, property and violent crime; patterns of drug use across time; and the need for drug treatment among the offender population.

The Australian Institute of Criminology will initially pilot projects in one location in each of three jurisdictions—New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland—for three years. The pilots are being run to determine if DUMA can feasibly be established given each jurisdiction's unique problems and concerns and their differing legal systems and operating procedures. Other pilot sites are also under consideration.





Source: USDEA.

...Urinalysis will provide information about offenders' use of heroin, cannabis, cocaine, methadone, amphetamines and benzodiazepines...

Objectives and methodology

The project has five main objectives:

- to collect data on offenders' illicit drug use at selected sites in Australia;
- to improve the quality of available data on illicit drug use in the offender population;
- to provide an early warning system for changes in patterns of illicit drug use;
- to provide for State and Territory law-enforcement agencies as well as national agencies—such as the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Customs Service, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and the National Crime Authority—aggregated data on the level of illicit drug use in the offender population;
- to establish a mechanism whereby local and national law-enforcement agencies can evaluate policy initiatives.

For two weeks each quarter trained local staff will interview people who have been arrested in the previous 48 hours and who are being detained in a central lock-up facility. Participation is voluntary and anonymous: names and addresses are not kept, nor are the data linked at a later stage to any official data such as a criminal record.

The data will be analysed to provide estimates of recent drug use among the offender population. The data will be presented at aggregate level. Staff responsible for conducting the interviews will not be police officers and a standardised collection procedure will be implemented across sites.

Overseas experience

The United States has been conducting surveys (including urinalysis) of offenders since the mid-1980s. The program was originally called the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Program; it was replaced in 1988 with the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program. The Program has played a central role in studying the drug-crime link. DUMA is based on this activity and is affiliated with the International Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program.

In the early 1990s the UK Home Office commissioned a pilot study to determine the feasibility of the US Program being launched in the United Kingdom and whether it would provide useful data for policy initiatives. The pilot was regarded as a success, and the Home Office has said it intends to implement the program on a continuing basis.

The benefits offered by DUMA

Urinalysis will provide information about offenders' use of heroin, cannabis, cocaine, methadone, amphetamines and benzodiazepines. The interview instrument will produce self-reported data on patterns of illicit drug use and record personal accounts of the efficacy of drug treatment programs.

As a consequence, authorities will gain a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between illicit drug use and offending behaviour.

The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and the National Crime Statistics Unit

In June 1997 National Drug Strategy funds were allocated to promote alternative community-based policing strategies aimed at reducing drug-related harm. These funds are to be distributed by the Board of Control of the National Community Based Approach to Drug Law Enforcement (NCBADLE).

As reported in the *Australian Illicit Drug Report 1996-97* (ABCI 1997), NCBADLE has funded the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and the National Crime Statistics Unit to develop a framework for the collection, analysis and publication of standardised national statistics on illicit drugs in order to facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of law-enforcement strategies. The National Drug Statistics Framework is designed to be a central component of a national community-based approach to drug law enforcement.

Stage one of the project is aimed at the development of a statistical framework that will take into account both law-enforcement and harm-minimisation goals, with particular emphasis on the assessment of outcomes in these areas. Subject to the Board's approval, stage two will involve the implementation of the approved framework.

The status of stage one

Following extensive consultation with law-enforcement agencies, health services, corrections departments and other stakeholders, the draft statistical framework was disseminated to stakeholders in mid-April 1998 for assessment and comment. State and Territory police services and the Australian Federal Police were also asked to provide an estimate of the time and cost involved in meeting the framework specifications.

Only slight modifications are envisaged to the draft framework in response to stakeholders' comments. The final stage one report is currently being drafted and is expected to be completed before the end of 1998.

The National Community Based Approach to Drug Law Enforcement

The NCBADLE Board of Control, the secretariat of which is located at the National Police Research Unit in Adelaide, has also commissioned the following projects that are yet to be completed and evaluated.

- A community-based drug law-enforcement model for intersectoral harm reduction—Mirrabooka, Geraldton, Morwell and Fairfield—Cabramatta. This project seeks to ensure that local-level illicit drug law-enforcement efforts minimise drug-related harm through the development of community-based structures, including drug action teams drawn from locally based government and non-government service providers and drug reference groups of high-level officers representing relevant agencies. This will allow a coordinated approach to the problem and will develop models of best practice.
- Evaluation of the community-based drug law-enforcement model for intersectoral harm-reduction trials. This project involves evaluation of the project just noted. Progress reports are due in October 1998 to January 1999 from the joint tenders.
- Drug Harm Reduction Education for Police. This project, which is linked to the National Drug Strategy, aims to develop nationally endorsed priorities in alcohol and other drug education programs for police, establish minimum national standards for alcohol and other drug training for police, and reduce potential duplication of effort between jurisdictions by identifying existing police drug education resources.
- Best Practice in the Role of Police in Diversion. This one-year project aims to document the existing role of police in alcohol and other drug-related diversion processes in Australia, identify the barriers to the use of police discretion in dealing with these matters, develop recommendations to overcome these barriers, clarify the accountability and support mechanisms needed to enhance the use of police discretion, and develop models of best practice for the involvement of police in drug-related diversion.
- Exiting the Heroin Market. This project, partly funded by New South Wales Police and NSW Health, will study the way in which street-level drug law enforcement influences the decision to seek or the desire for entry into methadone-maintenance treatment. It also aims to determine the nature of the contact with police that encourages heroin users to seek treatment and whether those who do not seek treatment differ in either levels or modes of contact with police.

The NCBADLE Board of Control is currently developing specifications for two further projects. The first will examine the impact of drug law-enforcement activities carried out by non-specialist drug law-enforcement officers. The second will examine community perceptions of illicit drug treatment facilities and their influence on crime in order to assess the implications for policing.

For further information about the NCBADLE funding program, telephone the secretariat—08 8362 3061.

The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence

The National Chemical Diversion conference

The inaugural National Chemical Diversion conference was held in August 1997 at the Bureau. It was attended by forensic chemists, investigators, intelligence officers and chemical diversion experts from the majority of Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand. The aim was to discuss operational matters relating to chemical diversion and clandestine laboratory investigation; for example, initiatives, a national code of conduct, and drug trends. It is hoped that the conference will be held annually.

Drug identification posters

In cooperation with the Victoria Forensic Science Centre, the Bureau's Drug Intelligence Desk has compiled two national drug identification charts—the *National Drug Identification Chart: tabs* and the *National Drug Identification Chart: tablets and capsules*. The logos displayed are a collation of logos provided to the Forensic Science Centre by all law-enforcement agencies. The Centre collates and disseminates a register of illicit drug logos on behalf of these agencies.

The two charts illustrate the various types of illicit drug logos known to law-enforcement agencies in Australia and elsewhere. Each of the logos is given an identification number. When law-enforcement officers discover substances bearing logos illustrated on the chart, they need only contact the Victoria Forensic Science Centre, the Bureau's drug desk, or their respective forensic or drug areas to receive a full profile of that particular drug. The charts also include the logos of some commonly abused pharmaceutical drugs.

So far the drug charts have been distributed to all Australian law-enforcement agencies and are available or have been sold to outside agencies such as the Ambulance Service, health and community organisations, and the Australian Customs Service. The Bureau is collecting images for an anabolic and androgenic steroid logo-identification chart and a heroin logo-identification chart; subject to funding, these will be published in 1999.



Source: Australian Customs Service.



The National Heroin Supply Reduction Strategy

The National Heroin Supply Reduction Strategy was developed as a result of concerns expressed at the 32nd meeting of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council about the increased availability and potency of heroin in Australia and the high frequency of fatal overdoses and heroin-related crime. The Strategy seeks to complement initiatives under the National Illicit Drug Strategy; in particular, it supports two of that Strategy's principle goals:

- to prevent and reduce the uptake of harmful drug use, particularly by young people;
- to reduce the availability of illicit drugs within the community.

The Heroin Supply Reduction Strategy recommends action within six broad areas:

- coordination of law-enforcement agencies' efforts to control the supply of heroin;
- interdiction at the international border;
- information and intelligence gathering and sharing;
- application of technology and best practice;
- legislation;
- development of meaningful performance indicators.

Coordination of law-enforcement agencies' efforts to control heroin supply

- Each agency to include input from partner agencies in training programs for investigators and managers and to facilitate the exchange of investigators between jurisdictions and agencies.
- The development of a uniform national training program, based on educational best practice, for supervisors and managers from each police jurisdiction and partner agencies.

Interdiction at the international border

- Conduct continuing research for the purpose of identifying and developing best-practice technology to enhance the Australian Customs Service's capacity to locate illicit drugs entering Australia.
- Ensure awareness within law-enforcement and other relevant agencies of the responsibilities, role and capabilities of the Australian Customs Service and partner agencies and the opportunities for coordination and mutual support.

Information and intelligence gathering and dissemination

- Identify information the law-enforcement community needs to collect and develop strategies for its collection, analysis and dissemination.
- Undertake research to contribute to a better understanding of the demand and supply environment.
- Recognise and use the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence's ACID/ALEIN database as the national intelligence database on illicit drug crime.
- Establish a joint Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence – Australian Federal Police – Australian Customs Service – National Crime Authority intelligence group to improve cooperation in relation to intelligence and operations.

Application of technology and best practice

- Monitor international developments in technology applicable to the heroin supply environment and ensure that jurisdictions and agencies apply resources to the pursuit and application of the latest technology.
- Provision of a highly protected, high-volume information technology network for the transfer of intelligence and operational information between key areas of Commonwealth operational law-enforcement agencies.
- Assessment of the potential for channelling funding from all jurisdictions to develop innovative approaches to drug law enforcement, including application of new technology.

Legislation

- As a matter of urgency, identify deficiencies in current legislation and policy and develop persuasive and comprehensive reasons for changing such legislation and policies to remove barriers inhibiting access to information.
- Remove existing legislation that may impede effective law-enforcement actions against foreign nationals involved in major drug activities.
- In consultation with the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, establish mechanisms for national drug law reform.

Development of meaningful performance indicators

- Develop performance indicators that measure quality outcomes of drug law enforcement.

New South Wales Police Service

Fairfield Drug Action Team

The Fairfield Drug Action Team, established by the New South Wales Police Service Drug Programs Coordination Unit in 1996, has received funding under the National Community Based Approach to Drug Law Enforcement to employ a coordinator for 16 months. The project involves the establishment of a local team supported by a project coordinator and a high-level drug reference group.

The Team is promoting an intersectoral harm-minimisation approach to local drug-related problems. It also aims to promote harm minimisation as the strategic and tactical aim of generalist and specialist drug law enforcement in the Fairfield local government area, working closely with the Cabramatta Place Management Project (a partnership between the New South Wales Government and Fairfield City Council, which was established in mid-1997 to provide tailor-made responses to the problems associated with illicit drugs in Cabramatta).

Among the Fairfield Drug Action Team projects to date are the following:

- provision of an information card on the discarded needle and syringe pick-up service, staffed by supervised periodic detainees;
- provision of an information card on drug and alcohol services, distributed by local police and health and education services;
- *What to Do if You Find or Are Pricked by a Needle or Syringe*, an information pamphlet in community languages;
- *Parents, Young People and the Law*, a document providing information about the law to parents of young drug offenders, to be produced in five community languages—the New South Wales Police Service is meeting the cost of the English version;
- Welfare Support for Green Valley Local Area Command, a project to assist this patrol with non-law enforcement activities;
- diversion of young offenders away from court systems—preliminary discussions have been held between the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Police Service and the Premiers Department.

Victoria Police Department

The 'Drug and Alcohol Affected Persons in Custody' deskpad

The purpose of the 'Drug and Alcohol Affected Persons in Custody' deskpad is to provide a visual reminder in watchhouses and on sergeants' desks of harm-minimisation policies and procedures relating to the safety and management of drug- and alcohol-affected people in custody. This is not a substitute for the departmental *Operating Procedures Manual*.

The deskpad is part of the Drug and Alcohol Resources Project funded on a cost-sharing basis under the National Drug Strategy. It has been provided to all watchhouses and sergeants' desks in Victoria. The feedback received to date has been positive. For further information contact

Christine Vincent
Project Officer
Harm Minimisation Liaison Project
Drug and Alcohol Policy Co-ordination
Ph. 03 9247 6742

Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Drug Abuse Warning System aims to provide early warning about patterns of use and harms associated with scheduled and unscheduled (for example, designer) drugs of abuse that may require action by decision makers and service deliverers. The System involves the Queensland Department of Health, the Queensland Police Service (including the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence Liaison Officer), and the Queensland Ambulance Service. Representatives meet fortnightly.

Although the three bodies currently have mechanisms for collecting information on drugs of abuse, there is a need for more systematic collection and sharing of this information within and between departments. The information can then be used by policy makers and service deliverers to respond to the constantly changing drug scene before major problem areas emerge.





Tasmania Police Service

As a result of the positive response to the Cannabis Cautioning Program conducted in Victoria, the Tasmania Police Commissioner approved a 12-month trial Cannabis Cautioning Program, which was implemented on 1 July 1998. The aim of the trial is to test the viability of a system of cautioning offenders detected using or in possession of small quantities of cannabis.

Strict criteria apply to the circumstances in which a caution can be issued:

- clear establishment of an offender's identity;
- adult offenders only;
- sufficient admissible evidence that the offence occurred;
- no other offence committed at time of detection;
- cannabis for personal use only;
- an amount not exceeding 50 grams;
- offenders having no prior drug offences or cautions;
- acknowledgment of the offence by the offender;
- consent to caution by the offender.

At this stage the trial cannot be evaluated as it is still in its infancy.

Legislation

New South Wales Police Service

The *Law Enforcement (Controlled Operations) Act 1997* came into force on 1 March 1998 and provides a statutory basis for the authorisation, conduct and monitoring of operations by law-enforcement agencies in New South Wales that involve what would otherwise be unlawful activities. The Act removes any doubt about the liability of participants in authorised operations and the status of evidence obtained in the course of undercover operations. It also ensures that controlled activities are conducted with integrity as well as with respect for the safety of operatives and members of the public and for property. The Act provides clear legal benefits to covert operations involving illicit drugs.

Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services

On 28 April 1998 the Kava Management Act was introduced in the Northern Territory. Under the Act no one will be able to possess, distribute or drink kava outside a licensed area. Certain areas have been designated 'licence areas'. Only a resident of a licence area is permitted to purchase kava within that area, and they must not possess more than 2 kilograms or 25 litres at any time. Limits may be placed on the amount of kava allowed to be in a licensee's possession at any time. A minor must not possess, purchase, be supplied with, or be required to purchase kava in any circumstances.

Victoria Police Department

Victoria Police announced it would extend its successful Cannabis Cautioning Program to divert people in possession of cannabis for their own use away from the courts and towards appropriate health services. The decision stems from the evaluation of a six-month trial conducted in the Broadmeadows Police District, in which some first-time offenders found in possession of small amounts of cannabis were cautioned rather than automatically charged. The Program has four important elements.

- It provides an alternative to court proceedings, thus avoiding the stigma that can be attached to a court appearance.
- It reduces the delay between the commission of an offence and its disposition.
- It provides support, assistance, encouragement and advice to offenders and, in the case of young people, their families.
- It facilitates communication, in an informal setting, between the cautioning officer and the offender.

The Program applies to adult offenders found to be in possession of or using, dried cannabis leaf, stem or seeds weighing not more than 50 grams for personal use. The offender must have no criminal history of drug offences. Other offences committed at the time of the detection and that can be dealt with by means other than prosecution—for example, a shop stealing caution or penalty notice—will not necessarily preclude a person from being cautioned.



The offender must admit to the offence and consent to being cautioned and will not be cautioned on more than two occasions. The caution notice given to the offender contains information about the health and legal ramifications of cannabis use and a confidential drug information telephone help line.

This initiative is consistent with the national and Victorian drug strategies and Victoria's 'Turning the Tide' strategy. At a broader level, cautioning for cannabis has gained general community support. Victoria Police have successfully incorporated the harm-minimisation philosophy in operational practice. The Program is indicative of the priority attached to these offences in addition to the broader supply-reduction strategies.

Queensland Police Service

In Queensland the *Police Powers and Responsibility Act 1998* came into force in April 1998, changing various facets of a large number of Acts dealing with police powers. The main changes affecting drug-related legislation are in sections 26 and 27 of the new Act.

Sections 26 and 27 give police the general power to stop, search and detain a person or a vehicle if it is suspected that the person has in their possession or the vehicle contains an unlawful weapon or knife, a dangerous drug, stolen property, unlawfully obtained property or tainted property, or if it is suspected that evidence of the commission of a seven-year imprisonment offence may be concealed on the person or destroyed. The Act also gives police the power to stop, search and detain a person if it is suspected that the person has something that may have been used, is being used, is intended to be used, or is primarily designed for use as an implement of house-breaking, for unlawfully using or stealing a vehicle, or for the administration of a dangerous drug, or that the person has something he or she intend to use to cause harm to himself, herself or someone else.

Notes

¹ Information obtained from the Australian Federal Police, the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority, and the Perth needle and syringe exchange program.

Reference

ABCI 1997, *Australian Illicit Drug Report 1996–97*, Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Canberra.