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Premier of NSW

Paul Toole
Deputy Premier of NSW
Minister for Police
Minister for Regional NSW

Bronnie Taylor
Minister for Women, Regional Health and
Minister for Mental Health

Brad Hazzard
Minister for Health

Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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LANDMARK INVESTMENT INTO ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG SERVICES AS PART OF THE RESPONSE TO THE ICE INQUIRY

The NSW Government today announced a half-a-billion dollar investment to deliver targeted health and justice reforms as part of its final response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug Ice.

Illicit drugs will remain illegal, with this investment aimed at breaking the cycle of drug use. The NSW Government considers that successful implementation of a pre-court diversion scheme is only achievable when relevant services and supports have been established in the health and justice system.

The four-year \$500 million investment is a key component of the NSW Government's response to the Ice Inquiry recommendations and will fund a range of health rehabilitation services and justice initiatives:

- \$358 million to address treatment gaps and improve health and social outcomes; and
- More than \$141 million to expand justice initiatives that make communities safer by prioritising offenders with intensive health intervention and better addressing underlying causes of offending.

The NSW Government supports, or supports in principle, 86 of the Inquiry's recommendations and notes 14 recommendations. The Government's final response addresses all 109 recommendations across health and criminal justice.

The NSW Government has previously rejected recommendations regarding the introduction of pill testing, expansion of the medically supervised injecting centre, removal of drug detection dogs and the trialling of a needle and syringe program in correctional facilities.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said illicit drugs will continue to be illegal, but today's announcement is the single-largest investment in evidence-based alcohol and other drug (AOD) services in the State's history.

"Ice can ruin lives and have devastating impacts on families and communities. This funding will provide relief, help and hope for thousands of people across NSW," Mr Perrottet said.

“We want to see real change in the community – especially vulnerable communities – when it comes to drugs and drug addiction. Our state needs a health response and a criminal justice response, and today’s announcement captures both.”

NSW’s vision for addressing the impacts of alcohol and other drugs will also inform the development of a new *Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy*, which will ensure a unified and coordinated approach across health and community services, education and law enforcement.

The latest funding is in addition to funds the NSW Government committed for drug-related services and initiatives in 2020-21. This included the establishment of a purpose-built treatment facility in Dubbo and \$27.9 million over four years to expand the NSW Drug Court in Dubbo, on top of the recent \$3.6 million upgrade to the courthouse.

Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional NSW and Minister for Police Paul Toole said today’s funding announcement bolstered the NSW Government’s existing commitment to supporting individuals and families affected by drugs.

“Every family grappling with a loved one’s addiction needs to know they will be able to access the services and support they need to break the cycle, no matter where they live,” Mr Toole said.

“We are not softening our stance on drugs – there remains zero tolerance for people who sell drugs on our streets and seek to profit from the despair they create. But we want better pathways for those struggling with addiction to get the help they need.”

A total of \$358 million will go towards health-related programs including evidence-based treatment support and early intervention services in regional and rural areas for priority populations (including Aboriginal people, pregnant women, young people, and people with co-occurring mental illness); integrating support for people with complex needs; enhancing digital capacity and virtual healthcare; increasing the alcohol and other drug workforce, and improving data utilisation to inform system monitoring and evaluation.

This funding will mean more than 30,000 people impacted by alcohol and other drug use will benefit from additional services. It will also support more than 11,000 people with AOD-related offending behaviour, and create more than 670 new jobs, with more than 63 per cent in rural and regional areas.

Minister for Regional Health and Mental Health Bronnie Taylor said the investment would help people to move forward in their journey to recovery with the funding going to areas where it is needed most.

“Putting health front and centre will ensure those who are struggling with drug use and addiction problems have access to the services and support they need to recover,” Mrs Taylor said.

“This once-in-a-generation investment will support our regional and rural towns where the impact of drug use, particularly ice, is magnified within tight knit communities and families.

e“Hundreds of new workers will be coming on board to help people who need it, including nurses, clinicians, psychologists and caseworkers with the majority based in rural and regional areas.”

Health Minister Brad Hazzard said today’s announcement is a further step in dealing with harm associated with crystal methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type stimulants that have a harmful effect on individuals, their families and NSW communities.

“There is no silver bullet to stop the far-reaching harm caused by illicit drug use across our state, but this funding will significantly change the lives of thousands of people who are in need of support and their families. We’ve made these bold decisions to ensure that, across NSW, we continue to support people and build stronger communities,” Mr Hazzard said.

“I would like to thank Commissioner Dan Howard SC and his team for their work in the Inquiry and acknowledge the experts, health practitioners, service providers, community members and people with lived experience who provided valuable contributions to the Inquiry.”

More than \$141 million will be invested in justice-related programs including expanding the Drug Court (including an Aboriginal list) and increasing investments in the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment program, Youth Koori Court, Circle Sentencing and Justice Reinvestment Program. The funding will support more than 11,000 people with AOD-related offending behaviour.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said tackling harmful drug use across NSW communities requires a comprehensive health response, not just a criminal justice response, which is what today’s investments by the Government will deliver.

“Our initiatives respond to clear evidence to improve the way we address drug use in this state. This is about being smart, not soft on crime,” Mr Speakman said.

“That’s why we’re supporting in principle the establishment of a pre-court diversion scheme when relevant support services and supports are sufficiently advanced in the health and justice system as well as significantly expanding existing court diversion programs.

“As detailed in the NSW Government response, the proposed pre-court diversion scheme would see an expansion of the current Criminal Infringement Notice Scheme (CIN) state-wide and include low level drug offences only.

“This would enable police to direct people to a tailored, intensive health intervention to better address the underlying cause of offending and harmful drug use. Under the scheme, police will retain discretion to determine to send an offender straight to court.

“Cannabis possession will continue to be addressed through the Cannabis Cautioning scheme, as we believe ice and other prohibited drugs should be treated differently to cannabis, through a separate, more serious scheme.”

The Special Commission of Inquiry Report and the final Government response is available here: <https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/special-commissions-of-inquiry/the-special-commission-of-inquiry-into-the-drug-ice/>

*For free and confidential advice 24/7 call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) on **1800 250 015**. Counsellors are available to provide information, referrals, crisis counselling and support. Or start a [Web Chat](#) with an ADIS counsellor online Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 5pm. Or visit the [Your Room](#) website which provides drug and alcohol information and advice, campaigns and resources.*

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