

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Commissioner's Foreword

Drug and alcohol abuse is a significant issue confronting not only Queensland Corrective Services (QCS), but the entire community. The costs associated with drug and alcohol use and its consequences to the community include family breakdown, generational unemployment, increased violence and crime and adverse health risks, such as accidents and lower life expectancy.

Queensland Corrective Services has a threefold purpose: to break the cycle of reoffending, to enforce the orders of the court and to improve community safety and their confidence in our work. Addressing widespread drug and alcohol use in the offending population is fundamental to this purpose.

Within correctional centres, the Agency is committed to ensuring prisons remain drug and alcohol free and that offenders who are abusing drugs or alcohol are being held accountable and given every opportunity to address these behaviours while in custody.

QCS has been successful in addressing and preventing drug and alcohol use through:

- investing in state of the art surveillance technology, coupled with the use of Passive Alert Drug Detection (PADD) dogs which has led to a reduction in the amount of drugs and drug-related paraphernalia smuggled into correctional centres;
- an innovative Indigenous Peer Support Program which trained and supported Indigenous prisoners to become peer educators and mentors in health and lifestyle choices, was nominated for a national drug and alcohol award;
- trialling drug rehabilitation units at Borallon and Woodford Correctional Centres that provide a structured drug treatment program to motivated offenders residing in separate drug-free accommodation with other program participants; and
- offering a suite of substance abuse programs which cater to differing substance abuse severity, risk of reoffending and sentence lengths.

We intend to remain tough on drug and alcohol abuse. This will include a stronger focus on rehabilitating offenders who abuse drugs and alcohol. In this way, we can help build a safer and healthier Queensland.

Kelvin Anderson
Commissioner

The Impacts of Drug and Alcohol Use on the Community

The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol comes at a significant cost to the Australian community with estimates totaling \$34.5 billion per annum. These costs include decreased productivity and increased work absenteeism, health care and hospitalisation, and criminality.

Tobacco, alcohol and pharmaceuticals cause the most harm within the community accounting for 93% of all drug-related deaths and illnesses. When combined with illicit drug use, it results in increasingly risky behaviour e.g. overdose, needle sharing, drug induced driving, gambling, crime and aggression, which add to the costs to the community. Drug offences specifically cost the Australian community \$1,960 million.

This link between drug and alcohol use and risk taking behaviours leads to increased contact with the criminal justice system. Evidence suggests a strong link between drug use and offending. Between 37 and 52 percent of adult offenders report their criminal activity is directly attributable to their drug problem.

Various studies show that:

- 51% of men and 35% of women identified alcohol and/or drugs as the cause of their lifetime offending career;
- 29% of offenders attributed their most serious current offence to drug and/or alcohol intoxication and 24% of offenders causally attributed their offending to drug and alcohol dependency;
- 70% of juvenile detainees were intoxicated at the time of their offence;
- homicide and assault offences were more likely to be attributed to alcohol intoxication while property, fraud and multiple offences were likely to be attributed to reported illegal drugs; and
- alcohol is involved in approximately half of all violent crime.

A meta analysis of the factors influencing drug use and criminal offending careers identified the following:

- drug addiction – those who are drug addicts are more likely to commit more crimes;
- levels of drug use – those who are higher frequency drug users or current users are more likely to commit more crimes; and
- frequency of offending – people offend more when they are using drugs more frequently.

There is a high level of illicit drug use among offenders prior to their entry to the correctional system. 71% of prison entrants had used illicit drugs during the twelve months prior to their incarceration, with 60% reporting a history of injecting drug use. For male offenders, the most commonly used drugs in the community include cannabis, heroin, amphetamines, ecstasy and hallucinogens. However, female offenders tend to use harder drugs like heroin, amphetamines and cocaine and abuse prescription medications.

It is estimated that 55% of released prisoners in Australia return to custody with re-offending strongly linked to drug/alcohol dependency and social disadvantage. Consequently, it is vital that offender drug and alcohol addiction be addressed to reduce the \$34.5 billion cost to the community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Offenders

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up approximately 3% of the Queensland population but account for 28.2% of the Queensland prison population. Research indicates that high-risk alcohol consumption and drug abuse are strong predictors of prosecution and imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders.

Mental Health

There is a strong link between the use of drugs and mental health issues with one study identifying 55% of participant drug users presenting with mental health issues.

Of those illicit drug users who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, 75% suffered depression, 10% paranoia, 10% schizophrenia and 5% had experienced drug induced psychosis. Suicide is also a major issue for drug users with mental health issues with lifetime suicide attempts at 3.6% for the general population and at 30% for injecting drug users.

There is an even greater link between the use of drugs, mental health and offending. Australian studies have found that prisoners experience mental health problems at a considerably higher rate than the general population. A NSW study found 74% of prisoners had experienced a psychiatric disorder compared with 22 % of people in the general population.

Policy Statement

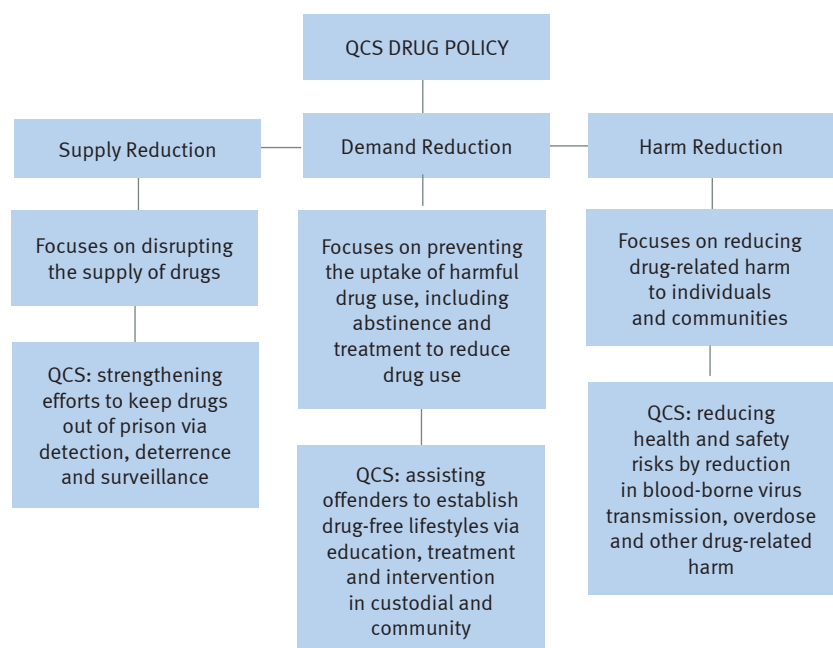
Queensland Corrective Services is committed to enhancing community safety and confidence in corrections by being tough on drugs and addressing the drug taking and alcohol abusing behaviours of offenders to enable them to live productive, crime-free and drug-free lives. This policy provides the framework for implementing a comprehensive approach to addressing drug and alcohol use through supply reduction, harm reduction and demand reduction strategies.

Policy Aims

The policy aims to:

- minimise the supply of and access to drugs and alcohol to Queensland offenders through continued efforts in detection, deterrence and intelligence;
- support and empower offenders to develop healthier lifestyle choices;
- reduce illicit drug use and harmful legal drug and alcohol use by offenders in prison and those serving community supervision orders through treatment and education programs and interventions;
- reduce health and safety risks that harmful drug use poses to both staff and the public; and
- position Queensland Corrective Services as a leader in rehabilitation and treatment of drug and alcohol addicted offenders.

To achieve these goals and address offender drug taking behaviours, Queensland Corrective Services will focus on supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction strategies.



Evidence shows that these strategies are only truly successful when the three pillars of supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction are employed in equal measure.

Queensland Corrective Services has traditionally focused on supply reduction strategies with strong success. Our investment in state of the art screening technology has led to a six percent increase in the number of visitors arrested for possession and concealment of contraband with a 29% increase in charges laid since 2008. Further, our drug testing program within prisons has delivered a reduction in offender drug use with positive results reduced by half over a five year period. The way forward is to now broaden our focus to better implement demand reduction and harm reduction strategies.

Minimising the Supply of Drugs

The supply of illicit drugs into Queensland correctional centres poses the risk of undermining the safety and good order of correctional centres, as well as increasing the risk of assaults and violence, threatening and coercive behaviour, overdose and health issues. Many offenders enter (and re-enter) the criminal justice system with established patterns of drug taking and abusing behaviours. Additionally, the drugs of choice are becoming increasingly smaller in size and therefore, more easy to conceal.

Minimising the supply of drugs into Queensland correctional centres and within the community will focus on increased detection and deterrence capabilities across the Queensland correctional system, including:

- introducing streamlined and accurate drug testing methodologies, practice and recording both in correctional centres and in the community;
- electronic screening of all visitors, tradespeople and staff;
- investigating new technologies to improve surveillance;
- using intelligence information to target persons suspected of drug smuggling or dealing within correctional centres and within the community;
- introducing consistent statewide sanctions for visitors who register a positive alarm on visitor screening equipment;
- introducing consistent statewide guidelines for responding to detected drug use by offenders;
- using biometric identification systems to identify visitors and improve security;
- undertaking regular cell, mail and perimeter fence searches; and
- introducing incentives for drug-free lifestyles.

Minimising the Demand for Drugs

One of the key side effects of long-term and sustained drug and alcohol use is the actual physical and psychological “need” to have another “fix”. Coupled with this is the need to ingest increasing amounts of the particular drug or to poly-use drugs, including alcohol, to address these physiological cravings.

Many drug and alcohol addicts are unable to maintain sustainable employment or personal relationships. Given the socioeconomic and familial situation of many drug and alcohol abusers, this demand for the next hit leads to crime as a means of feeding their habit.

To enable these offenders to address their drug taking behaviours and lead productive lives free of contact with the criminal justice system, Queensland Corrective Services aims to provide a range of education, treatment and intervention opportunities that will enable a reduction in their physical and psychological demand for drugs and alcohol. These include:

- improving upfront assessments of offenders with a drug and/or alcohol problem to ensure they receive individualised rehabilitation opportunities targeting their specific needs, including cultural and gender specific treatment and counseling which considers the needs of these groups;
- introducing consistent standard guidelines for case management of offenders on community supervision;
- referring offenders to available drug and alcohol treatment programs, both in correctional centres and in the community;
- investigating an expansion of drug rehabilitation units across correctional centres;
- establishing drug-free mentors for persons undergoing treatment to assist in overcoming drug and alcohol problems;
- referring offenders to drug courts or other diversionary programs as an alternative to jail. Drug courts and diversionary programs enable offenders to undertake rehabilitation under magistrate supervision to minimise their future contact with the criminal justice system;
- improving prisoner access to drug and alcohol treatment assistance pre-release, as well as referrals to drug and alcohol treatment agencies post-release; and
- building and strengthening partnerships with key agencies to advise and provide support to address the drug and alcohol abuse needs of offenders. More specifically, these include drug and alcohol rehabilitation agencies, Indigenous and mental health providers, and government agencies for assisting offenders both pre-release and in the community and with health issues.

Reducing the Harm Associated with Drug Use

Offenders' drug and alcohol abuse can have adverse health and social effects on staff, other offenders and the general public. These effects include possible infection of blood-borne diseases and injury sustained from violent behaviour or careless drug use. Research indicates a higher prevalence rate of Hepatitis C in prisons with the rate of infection in Victorian correctional facilities at 54.5% compared with 1% of the general population. This prevalence rate is due to the use of crude injecting equipment.

Initiatives to reduce the harm include:

- introducing bleach or other microbial agents within correctional centres to reduce the spread of blood-borne viruses such as Hepatitis C;
- exploring expanding the pharmacotherapy program to include known drug users to reduce their need for drugs;
- reintroducing the Indigenous Peer Support Program to promote healthy lifestyles for Indigenous offenders and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors; and
- strengthening partnerships with stakeholders, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mental health agencies and rehabilitation experts.

Action Plan

The *Queensland Corrective Services Drug and Alcohol Policy* will be implemented during 2011 and 2012 and incorporate part of agency business planning. Implementation over two years is necessary to ensure broad stakeholder consultation and intensive research of all related initiatives, as well as to accommodate the fiscal restraints currently being experienced across government departments and agencies.

Many strategies outlined above are already in place and will continue as core business. These have not been included in the action plan.

We will return to this plan over time as we progress to review and update our actions.