



18 DECEMBER 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

AFPA supports the call for an inquiry into the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Harm Reduction Policy

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) welcomes the call from ACT Greens spokesperson for Drug Harm Minimisation Johnathan Davis MLA for an inquiry into the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Harm Reduction Policy.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that recent community discussion regarding the private members bill submitted by Member for Yerrabi Michael Pettersson MLA showed a need for much more dialogue and consultation and that the suggestion of an inquiry into alcohol, tobacco and drug harm reduction represented an excellent step forward.

“Mr Pettersson’s bill is relatively narrow in its scope. My understanding is the inquiry will be trying to look at the bigger picture and see how the bill could work within community expectations. We don’t wholly oppose Mr Pettersson’s bill, but a lot more consultation, research and work needs to be incorporated into it.

“One of our biggest questions is whether the ACT has diversion strategies and organisations that can support people with short-term and long-term assistance. Drug dependence and addiction can’t be addressed with a few educational sessions and a \$100 fine. For some people, it’s a life-long battle; these people need support. There is no point in pushing legislation through if people can’t get help and assistance at the other end.

“Without support, a person can become trapped in a cycle of drug dependence and potential criminal activity, with little chance of escaping or addressing their health concerns. We don’t want to see police resources being tied up dealing with the same people regularly due to drug dependence - we want a system that is proportionate and appropriate but also ensures that people get the help and support they need,” Mr Caruana said.

The AFPA supports Mr Davis’ call for the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing to launch an inquiry into the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Harm Reduction Policy.

Mr Caruana said that an inquiry would be the best way to take a temperature check of the community and facilitate a free and open discussion of the pros and cons of the policy in its current form.

“People are very passionate about this topic. Some people are adamant that drug suppliers and users require harsher punishment, while other people believe that all drugs should be decriminalised.”

“Hopefully, if this inquiry does eventuate the outcome determined will be satisfactory to the community, and properly consider expert opinions from all sides of the debate,” Mr Caruana said.

END STATEMENT

For comments:

AFPA Media and Government Relations Manager
Troy Roberts – (02) 6285 1677 – troy.roberts@afpa.org.au