

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DRUG CONTROL FOR THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

The National Anti-Drug Strategy 2009-2013

“A BRIEF”

The National Drug Council through a consultative process with key stakeholders and expert guidance from an external consultant has formulated “A Comprehensive Approach to Drug Control, the National Anti-Drug Strategy (2009-2013).” The primary aims of the Strategy is to; significantly reduce the prevalence of drug use among the Cayman Islands population and to reduce the social harm and health damage it causes in the society. To this end it seeks to accomplish the following three general objectives: preventing illicit drug use; treating those with illicit drug dependencies; and combating the availability and distribution of illicit drugs on and within the islands.

In order to effectively address the issues of drug control, the Cayman Islands has opted for a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach which considers the drug problem from two main approaches - demand reduction and supply reduction. This balanced-approach obviously integrates different complementary levels:

- **Within the framework of demand reduction** -treatment and rehabilitation, prevention and information gathering and dissemination;
- **Within the framework of supply reduction** - law enforcement, interdiction and international control; and
- **Within the framework of legislative, policy and institutional development** - strategic direction and partnership with numerous national level stakeholders and civil society.

The National Drug Council has assessed for the period of 1995 to present, the level of achievements of the activities set out in the former Strategy (1995-1999) and the extent to which these met the objectives of the former Strategy. The final assessment noted improved cooperation between national providers and a clearer awareness of the need to take preventive actions starting from an early age. It also noted a need for further research into the consequences of drug use

and addiction, improved implementation at the national level and further development of a holistic, integrated and balanced approach for future national drug control initiatives.

The assessment also drafted conclusions and proposals for the future. Although the Strategy was not fully implemented it was concluded that it provided an important framework for drug related activities at a national level and a strong incentive for those involved, to implement them.

The national anti-drug strategy meetings held September 20th and 21st 2007 demonstrated a clear need for a new plan that would be essential in providing an enhanced strategic and coordinated approach, to the continued problems associated with drug use and misuse in our society. At implementation, the National Drug Council would now bear responsibilities for coordinating the anti-drug efforts and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy (2009-2013) and its programmes.

This strategy can be viewed simply as an integral part of government's effort at addressing the social problems facing the society. It has two general aims with regard to drugs that are complementary to the overall health and safety of the population that can be summed up as follows:

- ❖ The Cayman Islands aims for a contribution to the attainment of a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion by adopting and implementing action in preventing and reducing drug use, dependence and drug related harms to health and society.
- ❖ The Cayman Islands aims to ensure a high level of security for the general public by taking action against drug production, cross- border trafficking in drugs and diversion of precursors, by intensifying preventive action

against drug-related crime, through effective cooperation embedded in a joint approach.

The National Anti-Drug Strategy (2009-2013) for the Cayman Islands will act as the new blueprint for Cayman Islands' response to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, misuse and abuse. It will be the means by which existing resources may be harnessed and yet others marshaled, their services streamlined and guided, and will set out the Cayman Islands national policies and priorities in the campaign against substance abuse. It will also substantially assist in ensuring that a broader base of inter-departmental corporation take place and as such, using a **whole-of-government approach**, seek to facilitate the identification of substance abuse issues in relevant activities and budgets.

It will in short, act as the barometer of the commitment and performance of the government, the private sector and civil society in the field of drug control.

The Problem

Two features of the drug problem in the Cayman Islands can be established in spite of deficient data:

- quantitative indicators of drug use in the Cayman Islands are significantly increasing; and
- there is a notable underutilization of the institutional care infrastructure organized to handle the drug problem.

At the same time, the drug problem in the Cayman Islands is similar to most other Caribbean communities with respect to two characteristics:

- the prevalence of the phenomena; and

- the drug problem has a lower influence on the organized criminal situation in Cayman Islands than in other countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago or even Guyana.

Forecast

If we fail to succeed in achieving rapid and fundamental changes in the system of prevention and care, and if there is no positive change in the structure of budgetary funds, and if we do not succeed in changing the unfavourable tendencies together with the institutional and voluntary agents of society,

Then the number of drug users in the Cayman Islands will presumably rise over the next few years. This growth may arise from the deficiencies of the institutions of prevention, treatment and law enforcement. It is also expected that epidemiological surveys done in the future will outline a more realistic picture of the dimensions of drug use.

This picture would presumably show less favourable tendencies than expected (and what can be estimated from the available data). Precisely owing to the underutilization of the system of treatment, the number of drug users in a progressed phase struggling with severe physical, psychological and social problems will increase. In this case, the social costs of drug use (damage caused by crime, the cost related to the criminal justice system and health care treatment) will presumably rise dramatically in the future. The impact of inappropriate prevention measures will see the age of first use reduced further and the primary school population could also be hit in relatively large numbers by the drug problem.

Based on the picture outlined from the data and the experiences of experts, social intervention should be focused on comprehensive drug prevention education in

schools. Public education should be functioning in the local communities with particular regard to the family and the school; the development of the institutions reducing demand for drugs (with special regard to the institutions of treatment and rehabilitation); and the reduction of individual and social risks and of accessibility to the supply of drugs.

Justification of Proposal

The Government of the Cayman Islands having recognized the seriousness of the drug problem and its social, economic and public health impact seeks approval for the National Anti- Drug Strategy (2009-2013) which is based on a balanced and comprehensive approach to problems related to drug trafficking, distribution and misuse. The current Strategy is viewed as a manifestation of the Government's commitment to help all affected by the illegal distribution and use of drugs.

We recognize the serious nature of the problems associated with drugs at both the domestic and international level. We are also aware that we can only be successful in fighting drugs by harnessing the efforts of the Government, civil society, NGOs and international partners. As a Government we are ready to face this challenge and commit ourselves to working in partnership on the implementation of the Strategy.

We are convinced that our efforts will help control the growing adverse effect of drugs on our society. There is no doubt that solving the problems associated with the misuse and distribution of drugs cannot be the responsibility of a single institution, it takes the joint efforts of the whole society to resolve those problems. By joining the individual efforts at national and community levels we are committing ourselves to transforming the isolated efforts of individual

institutions into a collective effort to assist our country and contribute to the international fight against drugs and organized crime.

We are aware that our main aims and tasks will take time to develop into an effective control strategy. We recognize that what is presented is a first step towards achieving our strategic priorities. Therefore, with this revised **National Anti-Drug Strategy** we outline the framework for our future actions over the next five years.

This strategy envisages renewal of structures to achieve delivery of our strategic aims and it will be followed in due time by a timetabled **Action Plan**. The Strategy launches a difficult but extremely important transition where the joint efforts of individual Ministries and Agencies will develop into strategic interaction. To build this approach the strategy includes the following four key elements:

- ✓ **Improving the development and implementation of a balanced approach to drug demand reduction and supply reduction**
- ✓ **Establishment of strategic co-ordination**
- ✓ **Improvement of information exchange**
- ✓ **Local programme delivery - strengthening the role of community level interventions**

This comprehensive approach will ensure the achievement of the strategic aims and will lead to those concrete results in terms of reduced supply and demand of drugs. To develop the comprehensive nature of the strategy, however, it is necessary to work out an Action Plan that will link the National Anti-Drug Strategy with other key national reforms and strategies relevant to countermeasures against drugs demand and supply.

The Objectives

The National Anti-Drug Strategy is a collaborative effort involving a broad cross-section of society. The main objectives of the National Anti-Drug Strategy in these seven priority areas are

- 1. To strengthen and assist families and communities affected by drug abuse.**
- 2. To provide a national policy framework for the delivery of a comprehensive drug education programme**
- 3. To guarantee the delivery of treatment and rehabilitation services that meets the needs of the individual**
- 4. To support the supply reduction efforts of law enforcement and interdiction agencies.**
- 5. To develop a culture and practice of data collection and dissemination in relation to substance abuse**
- 6. Provide clear indications about the merit and worth of current actions and activities at the local level**
- 7. Encourage multi-agency cooperation and the involvement of civil society and the private sector and the international community**

It is with the approval of Cabinet of these key objectives, that this National Anti-Drug Strategy will serve the Cayman Islands as a comprehensive instrument in addressing the impacts of drugs in our community.