

# Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy – the first 12 months



I N F O R M A T I O N S H E E T ■ M A Y 2 0 0 2

In March 2001 the Government announced an \$18.8 million comprehensive plan to tackle drugs and crime problems in Cabramatta.

The Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy includes:

- More police powers and resources to shut down drug houses and clear the streets of drug dealers and drug users;
- Compulsory treatment for drug users and the expansion of drug rehabilitation and treatment services;
- The City Watch program to bring police and the local community together to develop solutions to local crime; and
- The expansion of early intervention and prevention programs – like Gateways and the Cabramatta Street Team.

The rollout of initiatives began on 1 July 2001. There has been some encouraging results to date, however, there is still a lot of work to do in Cabramatta.

This Information Sheet summarises key aspects of progress in Anti-Drug Strategy initiatives.

The Government will continue to closely monitor progress in Cabramatta.

## New powers and resources for police

The Cabramatta Anti-Drug Strategy introduced new powers for police and increased policing resources in the area.

Since January 2001 75 drug houses have been shut down in Cabramatta, 15 of these were shut using new drug house laws introduced on 1 July 2001.

Since 1 July 2001:

- 51 people in Cabramatta have been charged with being in, entering and leaving a drug house;
- 16 people in Cabramatta have been charged with organising or conducting a drug house;

- 209 people have been charged in the Greater Hume Police region with 288 charges relating to supplying drugs; and
- 3,214 'move-on' directions have been issued in Cabramatta.

**Police resources** have increased:

- Cabramatta Local Area Command re-graded to Grade 1 in recognition that Cabramatta is a complex policing area, which should be a priority;
- A new \$12.78 million Cabramatta police station due for completion by mid 2003;
- 5 of the 10 new drug detective positions created have been appointed to date; and
- The rapid response Bicycle Squad has also been increased from 6 to 12.

## Interpreters

The Cabramatta police are able to access interpreters as needed for community languages in Cabramatta. The Cabramatta Local Area Command is using the Community Relations Commission's on-call and telephone interpreter services, and the Commission has employed an additional Vietnamese interpreter dedicated to Cabramatta.

## Better skills for police working with the community

NSW Police have instituted a specialist TAFE certificate course for officers of the Cabramatta Local Area Command. Cabramatta police are being trained to have a basic knowledge of Vietnamese for simple conversations and to take down crime reports. Officers will also have an appreciation of Vietnamese culture and history. A shorter course is also available to officers in the Cabramatta area.

In December 2001, the first 13 officers graduated from the specialist TAFE course. A further 122 officers in the Cabramatta area are progressively undertaking the shorter course in cultural awareness and skills.

## City Watch

City Watch brings together local police, business and the community to develop responses to local crime. It has been operating since July last year, and has met six times.

Seven community 'link groups' have been established – a Neighbourhood Watch Group, School Principals Group, a Youth Group, Media and Public Relations, Khmer Elderly, Youth and Policing Issues and Senior Citizens Groups. They provide advice to the City Watch Council. New groups continue to be established.

Through City Watch a range of community concerns are being raised and action taken to address those concerns. For example, community concern over the issue of street prostitution.

### Crime Statistics

According to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research there was a reduction in the following crimes in Cabramatta between January 2000 and December 2001:

- Motor vehicle theft went down by 37 percent;
- Stealing from motor vehicle fell by 24.8 percent;
- Robbery with a weapon other than a firearm went down by 7.1 percent;
- Robbery without a weapon fell by 4.9 percent; and
- Weapons offences in general declined by 19.2 percent.

The reduced heroin supply combined with the work of local police is having a dramatic effect on heroin use in Cabramatta.

- Heroin possession offences have fallen by 63.9 percent;
- The number of needles and syringes dispensed to drug users from the Drug Intervention Service in Cabramatta has fallen from 40,239 in January 2001 to 9,991 in January 2002;
- Ambulance call outs to drug overdoses has fallen from 385 in the last six months of 2000 to 15 in the same period last year; and
- The number of drug related deaths has also fallen from 24 to 5 over the same period.

## Treatment (treatment and rehabilitation)

From 1 July 2001 two new programs – **Police Drug Bail** and **Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)** – commenced in Cabramatta. These programs steer offenders with drug problems into treatment and rehabilitation services to prevent further drug-related crime and improve the individual's health and wellbeing.

The **Police Drug Bail Scheme** and **Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)** have been operating since July 2001.

- By 29 March 2002, 28 offenders had been accepted into the MERIT program. 13 offenders were in the program and 10 have graduated;
- By 28 February 2002, 21 offenders had been ordered by police to attend drug treatment and assessment as a condition of bail; and
- By 20 March 2002, 393 offenders had been bailed by Police to not to return to Cabramatta.

Additional capacity for up to 100 **drug treatment places** has been made available at Liverpool Hospital. So far this has met the local needs.

**Mental Health Services** have been expanded for clients with drug and mental health problems.

Priority access to up to 4 **residential rehabilitation beds** has been established.

A **Central Assessment Service** has been established to coordinate the assessment and referral of people requiring drug treatment services.

The Government is working with Fairfield City Council to identify an appropriate site for a new treatment facility. The facility will dispense medication to up to 300 people.

### Crisis accommodation

Providing the opportunity for stable accommodation has helped people maintain their schooling, hold down jobs and help them move in a new direction.

Hume Community Housing has provided extra crisis accommodation – 40 short-term leases and 10 long-term leases – in Cabramatta and surrounding areas. Cabramatta Community Centre's Youth Team manages the referral and set up process for these leases, with funding from Department of Community Services. This Team also maintains a roster of on-call workers for the Intoxicated Persons 'crisis house'.

From 1 July 2001 to April 2002:

- 42 people have been provided with accommodation;
- 35 people are currently housed, including seven families;
- 14 of these people have succeeded in stabilising their lives and remaining in these tenancies for several months.

## Linking drug and alcohol affected homeless people to services

The *Intoxicated Persons Act 1979* enables Police to detain intoxicated and often homeless people who are found in public places and who may be a harm to themselves or others. They are then released to their families or referred to appropriate treatment, accommodation and other services.

Police, NSW Health and the Department of Community Services are developing protocols about how Police refer intoxicated people to appropriate services. The Cabramatta Intoxicated Persons Local Protocol became operational on 1 July 2001, to coincide with the Anti-Drug Strategy.

To 29 March 2002:

- 11 people had been referred under the Protocol to health services for immediate assessment of health risks (three refused assessment);
- Six people had entered into treatment and two were referred to other treatment services;
- Eight people were accommodated by the Cabramatta Street Team at housing specifically for this use under the protocol.

## Intervention and Prevention

Since 1 July 2001, the Department of Community Services' Street Team has helped the young, the homeless and the drug affected find accommodation and access drug and alcohol treatment services. The service is based at Cabramatta Police Station and operates seven days a week.

To 17 May 2002, the Street Team has:

- Made contact with 478 people on 933 occasions;
- Been approached by people in need on 165 occasions;
- Received 210 referrals from local police; and
- Referred 296 people to accommodation and drug and alcohol services.

## Helping families cope with illicit drug problems

Uniting Care Burnside's 'Moving Forward' project provides intensive family support, counselling and access to drug treatment and other services that may be needed.

Since the program commenced in November 2001, 17 families, including 22 family members who are drug users, have been helped.

The Department of Community Services funds the project.

## Linking families with schools and communities

### Gateway Program

The **Gateways Program** started last year in the Cabramatta/Fairfield area. It helps school students who might get involved in drugs or not complete Year 12. As at 30 April 2002:

- 124 students had received individual case management;
- 90 students had completed TAFE vocational courses;
- 11 students had been involved the Salvation Army Café Horizons hospitality course; and
- 63 Year 7 students transitioning from primary school to high school have had individual education plans written for them.

All high schools in the area have participated in a two-day workshop to review current adolescent health issues. Staff are now implementing action plans to address issues relevant to drug education for students in Years 7-10.

### Families First and Primary Connect

Schools can provide an effective setting for supporting positive relationships between children and young people, and their families and communities.

The **Families First program** is already supporting between 70-100 families with children under 8 years of age at schools in the Cabramatta, Canley Vale, Bonnyrigg and Fairfield areas.

Under the program the local schools become 'focal points' for parents and the community, providing:

- family and child-related activities such as supported playgroups to help families build relationships within and outside the family unit;
- mentor support for the family particularly in the year prior to school and in the first year at the school;
- health related initiatives;
- language skills classes; and
- referrals to local services, and information about services, child development and parenting.

By mid 2002, the Schools as Community Centres program will be complemented by a new program **Primary Connect**.

**Primary Connect** will provide support for vulnerable 5-12 year old children and their families, particularly children at risk of leaving school early, drug use, offending and self harming behaviour. Identifying and dealing with problems early on will stop them becoming entrenched difficulties.



Cabramatta police and community members.

### The Multicultural Drug Education Program

In Cabramatta it is important that drug education resources meet the needs of non-English speaking background (NESB) communities. The Premier's Department is working with local agencies and community advisory groups to produce drug education programs and information appropriate for families in the Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao and Chinese communities.

### Better service responses for young people

Fairfield City Council and the Premier's Department have co-convened a Youth Action Team of government and non-government service providers. This Team is identifying ways of improving service delivery to young people in the area.

For example, the Youth Action Team, is developing responses to issues identified in the December 2001 report *Every day's the same: Youth Homelessness in Cabramatta* commissioned by Fairfield City Council and the NSW Government. The Team has set a number of follow-up actions with relevant agencies, to improve service provision for this group.

### Expansion of the Cabramatta Needle and Syringe Clean-up

Offenders serving Periodic Detention Orders do regular patrols to remove discarded needles from the streets. The clean-up enhances the public amenity of local residents and business by clearing Cabramatta's streets and public areas of discarded used needles and syringes. Since 1 July 2001, the Clean-up teams have collected 8,457 syringes.

If you find discarded needles please call the **Needle Clean Up Hotline** toll-free on **1800 633 353**.

## Cabramatta Place Project

In April 1997 the Premier's Department, in collaboration with Fairfield City Council and other agencies established the Cabramatta Place Project to tackle illicit drug use and its impact upon the Cabramatta community.

Cabramatta Place Project is working on the Anti-Drug Strategy at the local level. Work is also continuing on a range of issues such as tourism development and improving urban amenity (both led by Fairfield City Council) and employment education and training for young people.

For more information contact Senior Project Manager, Cabramatta Place Project on 9724 7811.

### Further Information

#### Need help?

If you, or someone you know, needs confidential help or advice about drugs, call the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)** on 9361 8000 (Sydney metropolitan only) or toll-free on 1800 422 599 (outside Sydney).

ADIS is open 24 hours a day, providing confidential advice, information and referrals to local agencies.

As a parent, tackling drug issues can be very challenging. For advice about how to talk to young people about drug use or behavioural problems please contact **Parent Line** toll-free on **13 20 55**.

#### Reporting Drug Crime

Any information you have about drug crime, even if you think it's unimportant, may help the Police make an arrest. To report drug-related crime call **Crime Stoppers** toll-free on **1800 333 000**.

#### Want to know more?

If you would like more information about the NSW Government's response to the drug problem, visit **[www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au)**

At **[www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au)** you will find more information about drugs, projects and measures being taken to address drug problems. Copies of the NSW Government's *Drug Summit Plan of Action*, other resources and links to other relevant sites are also available at the web site.