

Foreword

The use of alcohol and other drugs by offenders is one of the biggest issues facing Victoria's criminal justice system. Drug use is the single largest factor affecting the lives of offenders with over two-thirds of prison entrants reporting a history of illicit drug use and a high correlation between drug use, criminal activity and re-offending.

Responding to alcohol and drug-related issues, both in the community and in prison, is a constant challenge. Drug activity in prison has a negative impact on both prisoners and prison staff and broader society.

The implementation of the new Strategy in Victoria's prisons will improve ways of keeping drugs out of prisons and reducing prisoner drug use. It will also provide the opportunity to prevent the health problems, violence and other harm caused by drugs.

Building on the successes of the original strategy introduced in 1992, the new Strategy introduces new ways of responding to drugs in prison based on current community values, research and best practice in drug management from around the world.

While the new Strategy strengthens measures to stop drug use and drugs entering prisons, it also recognises that it is virtually impossible to stop drug use entirely and that prisoners enter the system with existing and entrenched drug use behaviours. It therefore introduces a range of initiatives designed to minimise the harm of any drug use that may occur in prison and provide incentives for prisoners to stop using drugs. The end goal is to help prisoners to establish drug-free and healthier lifestyles both within prison and after release from custody.

In an effort to minimise the negative impact of alcohol and other drug use, improve treatment results and promote safer prison environments, the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner is committed to supporting the introduction of this new Strategy across Victoria's prison system.

The Strategy was developed through a consultative process with key stakeholder groups and recognises the diverse perspectives of these groups. New collaborative partnerships have been fostered between government agencies and community sector organisations to develop and implement a best practice Strategy.

I commend the Victorian Prison Drug Strategy 2002 and invite stakeholders and the community to adopt this new and positive direction.

Dennis Roach
Acting Commissioner
March 2002