

COMMUNITY DRUG SUMMIT

Statement by Minister for Health

MR KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [2.15 pm]: I thank everyone who made the Community Drug Summit such a success. I take this opportunity to thank the Speaker for allowing the summit to use the Chamber, the members for their tolerance, and the parliamentary staff for their efforts - particularly the administration and catering staff.

It also gives me great pleasure to reveal today that the success of the Community Drug Summit has been mirrored in a survey of delegates. Figures released to me by the Community Drug Summit Office show that the overall satisfaction rating for the summit was an impressive 98 per cent, with 66 per cent of respondents saying they were highly satisfied with the process and a further 32 per cent describing themselves as satisfied. Delegates have also reported that they were happy with the balance and diversity of the working groups. Special praise was reserved for the work of the chairs - Hon Fred Chaney AO, Professor Liz Harman and youth representative Jade McSherry.

I add to the overwhelming view that all three chairs guided the summit with sensitivity, fairness and commonsense. Delegates canvassed by the Community Drug Summit Office also approved of the decision to hold secret ballots and most believed Parliament was the right venue for the summit - although some said the seating left a lot to be desired!

Most importantly of all, they were impressed by the willingness of delegates to listen to different viewpoints, regardless of their personal beliefs or philosophical approach to the drug question. The main criticisms focused on the need for more time to discuss the various proposals and some believed there were too many speakers.

The Community Drug Summit Office is currently preparing a report that will document all the input to the summit from the community, speakers and delegates. Beside the recommendations that came from the summit itself, the Government has received input from more than 1 100 individuals through the community consultation process. A further 109 organisations, representing more than 2 000 people, have also contributed to this pool of opinion and information. The Community Drug Summit Office will be responsible for helping to develop the Government's response to the summit recommendations. The office will be responsible for putting together a task force comprising senior officers from a number of agencies, chaired by Dr Denzil McCotter, to provide advice to the Government. A report will be presented to the Government in September and the Premier is expected to announce the Government's position on 19 October.

The results of the delegates' survey support the Government's view that the summit was transparent and representative. As a Government, we sought the community's views on how we should tackle the drug issue. The resultant recommendations have sent a clear message that it is time for change.