

CANNABIS USE — REGIONAL AREAS

14. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mental Health:

The 2004 National Drug Strategy Health Survey included a comparative analysis of cannabis use by health region. The results indicate that the Kimberley and goldfields regions had rates well above the state rate of 13.7 per cent, with the Kimberley at 30.2 per cent and the goldfields at 22.5 per cent. That indicates high cannabis usage in these regions.

- (1) What strategies has the government implemented to address the high rates of cannabis use in the Kimberley and goldfields regions?
- (2) Does the government expect the high rates of cannabis use to increase given the introduction of liquor bans in the various Kimberley townships and the possible substitution of cannabis for alcohol?
- (3) What additional resources have been invested in the Kimberley to address the high rates of use and to stem the possible increase of cannabis use in the future?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The Drug and Alcohol Office funds a range of alcohol and drug services in the Kimberley and goldfields. Services comprise counselling and treatment support, education and prevention, police and court diversionary services, and residential rehabilitation. Services address cannabis use as well as alcohol and other drugs.

The school drug education project provides school-based education across the state. This program operates in both the Kimberley and goldfields providing essential school-based education and prevention. Services in the Kimberley include: Kimberley Community Drug Service Team, which services the east and west Kimberley; Jungarni-Jutiya in Halls Creek; Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation in Wyndham; Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services in Fitzroy Crossing; Milliyya Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation in Broome; and the Warmun community. Services in the goldfields include: Goldfields Community Drug Service Team servicing the region but based in Kalgoorlie, with an office in Esperance; goldfields population health; Prospect Lodge halfway house; and Bega Garbarringu Aboriginal Corporation.

- (2) The Drug and Alcohol Office reports that it has not been advised by any service providers of an increase in cannabis use in Kimberley communities where liquor restrictions have been recently applied.
- (3) Additional resources that have been supplied to the Kimberley region for drug and alcohol treatment, including cannabis, include: two court diversion officers, east and west, at the Kimberley Community Drug Service Team directing drug-using offenders into treatment; two additional treatment officers at the Kimberley Community Drug Service Team as a result of the Intergovernmental Summit on Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities; an increase in funding, allowing two additional prevention and one treatment officer at Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services in Fitzroy Crossing; one new additional officer at Jungarni-Jutiya in Halls Creek; significant capital works and an increase in client beds at Ngnowar Aerwah residential rehabilitation plus improvements to the outpatient counselling centre in Wyndham; and additional funding to Milliyya Rumurra, Ngnowar Aerwah and the Warmun community to provide treatment services to clients referred for treatment through the court diversion programs.

Additional Aboriginal-specific resources have also been developed through the Strong Spirit Strong Mind program. The Australian government's Department of Health and Ageing has also provided additional funding for treatment services in the Kimberley. In particular, two positions were funded at Milliyya Rumurra in Broome and Jungarni-Jutiya in Halls Creek.