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# REDUCING THE HARM OF DRUGS

## Conference on drug abuse

Billions of dollars and thousands of lives are lost around the world each year because of the harm caused by illegal and legal drugs.

This harm — on both a national and international level — will be the main topic at a major conference to be held in Melbourne from March 23–27.

More than 600 delegates from all continents will gather at the '3rd International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm' — co-organised by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Victoria, and the Mersey Drug Training and Information Centre in Liverpool, England.

## Reducing their harm

The main aim of the conference is to increase understanding of the principles behind harm reduction, and examine harm reduction practices which are effective in developing and developed countries.

On the local scene, harm reduction has been the official aim of State and Federal Governments in Australia since the launch in 1985 of the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse.

It operates on the principle that we live in a drug-taking world, and responds by attempting to decrease the harmful effects of legal and illegal drug use. Harm reduction focuses on minimising specific types of harm which may affect the individual drug users, their families, workplaces and the wider community.

The conference program will cover many areas relating to harm reduction, including drug treatment, education and training, international law, policing, political change, the prevention strategies, kava, correctional settings, and women's issues.

## HIV/AIDS

It will also include a number of HIV/AIDS sessions on topics such as the issues facing research, and outreach alcohol and drug workers.

## Trade exhibition

A trade exhibition will run in conjunction with the conference, giving organisations and agencies an opportunity to exhibit their products and services.

## Who will attend

People expected to attend include politicians, policy makers, and health, welfare, education and law enforcement representatives. Keynote speakers include Professor David Hawks (Australia), Dr Patricia Erickson (Canada), Dr Virginia Berridge (UK) and Dr Don Des Jarlais (USA).

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