

Key themes for summit discussions

The NSW Government is holding a Drug Summit to build consensus on the way NSW addresses drug use

The NSW Government recognises the significant impact drug use can have on individuals, families and communities in NSW, and is committed to addressing harms to ensure people are healthy and well.

The Drug Summit has been announced to bring together medical experts, police, people with lived and living experience, drug user organisations, families, and other stakeholders to provide a range of perspectives and build consensus on the way NSW deals with drug use and harms.

The social, political and economic context has shifted significantly since the first summit

The NSW Government recognises the significant and enduring impact of the 1999 NSW Drug Summit. Many of the major milestones from the first summit still have a meaningful role in reducing drug harms today, including establishing a world-first medically supervised injecting centre, and diversion programs such as the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Program.

The social, political and economic context has shifted significantly since the first summit, as have patterns of drug use, treatment availability and an expanding evidence base. The context in which drug use and treatment occurs is impacted by factors including cost of living pressures, the COVID-19 pandemic and other social issues.

Since the last summit there has been growing recognition of the role of the social determinants of health, holistic approaches to health and wellbeing, the importance of cross-government responses and the need for integrated service delivery. Each of these factors will shape the discussions and outcomes from the 2024 Drug Summit.

The intent of this Drug Summit is to take stock of where we are now and examine opportunities of where we can bolster NSW's response to keep people safe and well.

This Drug Summit will build on the significant work already being done across NSW to reduce drug harms

In response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice', the NSW Government committed \$500 million to address substance use. Of this, \$358 million was allocated to NSW Health to address treatment gaps and improve health and social outcomes; and \$141.1 million to expand justice initiatives. The summit will complement and build on the work being done to implement these initiatives.

The Drug Summit will complement processes where the link between substance use and harms are being addressed

The Drug Summit will consider broad impacts of drug use and harms, noting that there are other significant processes being led by the NSW or Australian Governments that are examining related issues. For example, significant cross government effort is already underway to address the harms caused nicotine vaping products, particularly among young people. Volatile substance use including "nangs" is also being addressed by the NSW Government following the volatile substance use public consultation process and Roundtable held in 2024.

The Drug Summit is being held in the context of:

- The NSW Road Safety Forum
- Increased attention from Australian and NSW Governments on the intersection between domestic, family, and sexual violence and the use of alcohol and other drugs
- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- The first 2000 days (from conception to age 5) to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life.
- The 2024 NSW Social Media Summit
- The 2024 NSW Men's Mental Health Forum: Preventing Suicide
- The 2023 NSW Health Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Comorbidity Forum
- The 2023 Together for Humanity NSW Youth Summit

The summit will bring together a range of perspectives

The Government recognises the importance of bringing together a range of voices to pave a way forward. A participatory process will ensure the summit's success and outcomes that benefit NSW.

The NSW Government has appointed former NSW Deputy Premier Carmel Tebbutt and former NSW Leader of the Opposition, John Brogden as Co-Chairs of the upcoming NSW Drug Summit. The role of the Co-Chairs will be to help facilitate discussion as participants share insights and develop a report on the summit outcomes.

The multiday summit will comprise of two days of regional forums in Griffith on Friday 1 November, and Lismore on Monday 4 November, and two days of forums in Sydney on Wednesday 4 and

Thursday 5 December. The regional forums will ensure the unique experiences of people in regional NSW are reflected in the deliberations of the summit.

There will also be a public consultation process as part of the summit. From October 2024, NSW community members are encouraged to input into the Drug Summit by sharing their experiences, concerns and suggested solutions through the NSW Government's Have Your Say platform.

Priority populations including people with lived and living experience, Aboriginal people and communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people in regional NSW will be actively engaged in this process through peak bodies, local representatives and existing governance groups.

The summit themes will focus on improving outcomes for all members of the community

The NSW Government has announced the summit will focus on five key themes. These themes represent the outcomes being sought to benefit all members of the community:

- Health promotion and wellbeing
- Equity, respect and inclusion
- Safety and justice
- Keeping young people safe and supporting families
- Integrated support and social services.

The key questions that will be asked at the summit are how responses to drug use, drug dependence and drug harms in NSW can be addressed in ways which enhance each of these five outcomes.

Bringing together a diverse range of voices at the summit will allow for discussion and a process to achieve consensus about the best responses to achieve these outcomes.

Theme 1: Health promotion and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing describes quality of life and the ability to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.

Health and wellbeing is shaped by a range of factors. The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, significantly influence health outcomes. These are known as the social determinants of health.

Health promotion activities seek to support the social, educational, environmental, and economic conditions that promote health. They often address risk and protective factors.

Health promotion activities can include education, campaigns, legislation and regulation and building social and physical environments that support healthy behaviours. These activities can reduce harms, improve outcomes and are an important part of early intervention and prevention.

Ensuring the health and wellbeing of the population includes consideration of the mix, availability and accessibility of treatment and support services, as well as harm reduction services.

Some of the responses that could be explored to support this outcome include, but are not limited to:

- Drug harm prevention programs
- Harm reduction services

- Drug treatment services (including health promotion and wellbeing initiatives, primary care and specialist services)
- Programs to address prescription drug misuse.

Theme 2: Equity and inclusion

Outcomes are improved when access to services is based on need, is inclusive, and people are treated with fairness and respect. Health is a fundamental human right and supporting equitable service access and health outcomes has far reaching social benefits.

Achieving equitable access and inclusion means addressing stigma, discrimination and other avoidable barriers that emerge socially, economically, demographically, or geographically, and orienting services to those who need them most.

Some populations may experience more drug related harms compared to others, or require greater or different access to services, including:

- Young people
- Women/parents/carers with children
- Aboriginal people and communities
- People living in regional, rural and remote areas
- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- LGBTQI+ people and communities
- People experiencing domestic and family violence
- People with disability.

Theme 3: Safety and justice

Part of a comprehensive response to drug use includes law enforcement, to ensure safety and justice in our communities.

Australia's national approach to addressing drug use is known as *harm minimisation*, which relies on a coordinated health and justice response to:

- reduce demand
- regulate, disrupt and reduce supply
- reduce harm when use occurs.

Law enforcement responses include demand reduction and supply reduction activities, as well as strategies to reduce harm and keep people safe.

In the context of drug use, safety and justice encompasses issues including:

- Law enforcement responses for drugs
- Use of penalties
- Public amenity responses (responses that enable safe and liveable communities)
- Medicinal cannabis and driving
- Legal aid
- The role of alcohol and other drugs in exacerbating the frequency and severity of domestic and family violence
- Programs that focus on diverting people away from the justice system.

Theme 4: Keeping young people safe and supporting families

Early initiation drug use is associated with immediate and lifetime health risks, increased harm to the developing brain and increased likelihood of harms from substance use and dependence.

Keeping young people safe and getting families the support they need can have lifelong health, social and financial benefits. Approaches include:

- Ensuring children have the best possible start to life
- Providing young people with age-appropriate and evidence-based education
- Availability of early intervention services, including early childhood education and day care
- Support for families and friends caring for someone struggling with substance use
- Setting-specific responses (including at music festivals)
- Drug checking services
- Giving babies and children the best start in the first 2000 days of life (from conception to 5 years).

Theme 5: Integrated support and social services

Support and social services can significantly improve health, wellbeing, financial stability and engagement with family, friends and the community.

Specialist treatment and support services help people dealing with a drug issue, and their families. Other critical support services include mental health support, housing, and support leaving custody. These services can help with an acute substance use problem, and address the underlying social determinants of health that drive demand for services.

The integration and connection of support and social services, shapes their effectiveness. Treatment and support services must be available across the continuum of care and appropriately matched to need.

Some of the responses that could be explored to support this outcome include (but are not limited to):

- Service coordination and continuity
- Referral pathways
- Treatment and rehabilitation services
- Housing
- Employment
- Integrated linked data
- Services addressing domestic and family violence with co-occurring alcohol and other drug use.