

Young people now more reluctant to take drugs

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Young Australians are now less likely to accept an offer of drugs following an Australian Government campaign to warn young people about the consequences of illicit drug use. An independent evaluation of Phase Two of the National Drugs Campaign examined the campaign's impact in influencing young people's behaviour about drugs.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, said today the independent evaluation of Phase Two of the National Drugs Campaign had shown the campaign's impact in influencing young people's behaviour about drugs.

"The research showed that 97 per cent of young people surveyed found the campaign's television commercials believable," Mr Pyne said.

"At least 90 per cent judged each of the commercials to be effective in making them think about the consequences of using drugs.

"About two-thirds of the young people surveyed reported that the campaign had influenced them, primarily to avoid using drugs and situations where they are used, and to think about the consequences of using them.

"As well, more than half felt the campaign had made it easier for them to discuss illicit drugs with their parents."

Mr Pyne said around two in every three parents felt the campaign had made it easier to talk to their children about illegal drugs.

Phase two of the campaign was launched in April 2005, and comprised a series of hard-hitting advertisements on TV and other media to highlight the harmful effects of the three most commonly used illegal drugs - marijuana, ecstasy and speed.

Background research for the campaign found that more than 50 per cent of young people in Australia had used one or more of these drugs, with many unaware of their major negative health and social consequences. The campaign pointed out to current and potential drug users the effects of these drugs on their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

As well as alerting youth to the negative effects of these drugs, the campaign offered positive alternatives to drug use, information on counselling services for drug users and their families, and reinforced the message that parents should talk to their children about drugs.

The National Drugs Campaign is designed to educate young people and their families about the consequences of illicit drug use. It is a major component of the National Illicit Drug Strategy, announced by Prime Minister John Howard in November 1997.

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Note to editors

Research - key findings

Youth

- Recall and recognition of the campaign elements were very high and the key campaign messages were communicated and retained.
- Increases in beliefs about the negative consequences of taking illegal drugs were observed with respect to each drug included in the campaign.
- Young people were asked whether the campaign had influenced what they did or thought about drugs. Sixty-five per cent of respondents reported that the campaign had influenced them to some extent. The most common influences being: avoid using drugs (36 per cent); think about drugs or the consequences of using them (19 per cent).
- One in two young people felt that it was easier to talk to their parents about illegal drugs.
- Finally, the proportion of young people 'at risk' of accepting a friend's offer of marijuana and speed decreased significantly after the campaign.

Indigenous youth

- Recall and recognition of the campaign elements were very high for young Indigenous people and, again, the key campaign messages were communicated and retained.
- Three in four felt that the campaign had influenced what they did or thought about illegal drugs, with the most common influences being to avoid using drugs and to think about drugs or the consequences of using them.

Parents

- Parents felt that the campaign made it easier for them to talk with their children about drugs by acting as a trigger for conversation.
- They also believed that these conversations with their children were effective in discouraging them from using illegal drugs.
- Prevention strategies identified by parents were consistent with campaign messages and included interactive communication between parent and child.

For more information, see www.drugs.health.gov.au/pdf/nidc_eval2.htm

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2006-cp-pyn012.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2006&mth=3>