



RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY USE OF LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS POLICY

DOCUMENT TYPE: Council policy

DOCUMENT STATUS: Approved

POLICY OWNER POSITION: Director Community Wellbeing

INTERNAL COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT: Not applicable

APPROVED BY: Council

DATE ADOPTED: 23/05/2017

VERSION NUMBER: 1

REVIEW DATE: 23/05/2021

DATE RESCINDED: Not applicable

RELATED STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS, POLICIES OR PROCEDURES: Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan

RELATED LEGISLATION: Not applicable

EVIDENCE OF APPROVAL:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. Rigney".

Signed by Chief Executive Officer

FILE LOCATION: K:\EXECUTIVE\Strategies policies and procedures\Policies - adopted PDF and Word\POL Response to community use of legal and illegal drugs policy v1.docx

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This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

1 PURPOSE

This policy provides the community and Council with details of Council's strategic response to drugs, the harm minimisation principles which guide the response to drug use in the community and the key roles Council will play.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to community use of both legal and illegal drugs across all areas of Council. In this policy both legal and illegal drugs will be referred to as 'drugs'.

In developing this policy, it is noted that any response to drugs requires collaboration with whole of community and will also include, among others, Victoria Police, Department of Education and Training (DET) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), drug treatment services, local health and community health services and other non-government community organisations.

3 POLICY

Drugs, legal and illegal, warrant Council attention and response, both in terms of the harm to users, and the impact that their use has on the wider Loddon community.

Whilst an appropriate and workable response to drugs requires a whole of government approach from all levels of government, as well as other organisations, as the government closest to the community, Council plays an advocacy and facilitation role.

3.1 Harm Minimisation

Harm minimisation aims to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs on individuals and society. A harm minimisation approach is based on reduce supply, reduce demand and reduce harm.

Harm minimisation accepts that drugs exist, are being used, and threaten life and wellbeing. The aim of harm minimisation is to prevent potential harm and reduce actual harm done to individuals and to the community by drugs. Harm minimisation does not imply support for or condoning of illegal drug use, and does not advocate for the decriminalisation or legalisation of drugs which are currently illegal.

3.2 Population Health

Council strategies will consider population health, using an evidence based approach to inform a whole of community approach. Drug use will be considered within the domains of health, social and legislative frameworks.

Changing trends and needs on drug response will be reviewed to ensure that strategies continue to be relevant to the whole community.

3.3 Consultation

To ensure that Council's response to drugs is and remains informed and accurate, Council is committed to ensuring that a range of views are sought and that appropriate consultative processes and mechanisms are in place.

3.4 Range of responses

3.4.1 Facilitation, Advocacy and Partnership

Local government is in close contact with residents, community organisations, business and other stakeholders at a local level. This can be used to develop shared understandings and encourage a whole of community response.

Council will:

- assess the opportunity to develop strategies based on harm minimisation, population health and consultation pertaining to drug response in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan which may include:
 - establishment of a Loddon drug action network
 - development of a Loddon drug action plan and monitoring of associated outcomes
 - facilitation of community information and education;
- develop partnerships to gain a stronger understanding of the current drug use status;
- liaise with federal and state governments and other organisations in the planning and implementation of their responses to drug issues;
- work with all levels of government and community agencies to ensure effective, coordinated responses to drug issues;
- develop or maintain partnerships with other government or community organisations currently operating in the drug minimisation environment;
- participate in regional and state networks to ensure current and best practice information is available, for example through bodies such as the Municipal Association Victoria (MAV) Local Government Alcohol and other Drugs Issues forum.

3.4.2 Regulatory and compliance environment

Council is committed to ensuring it is operating to its full regulatory and compliance capacity.

Council will:

- continue to review the legislative and regulatory environment – local laws, planning and environmental health;
- ensure that the needs of our community are addressed;
- work with the local community, government departments and business within the applicable regulatory and compliance frameworks in developing plans and strategies to respond to drug issues within the municipality with a whole of community approach.

3.4.3 Community service delivery, community development and community engagement

Council will contribute to the safety, health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, and support community participation.

Council will:

- continue to work with the Department Health and Human Services and key partnership groups in the development and continuous review of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan;
- through environmental health strategies:
 - continue to play an active role in the safe disposal of needles and syringes
 - continue to facilitate tobacco/smoking awareness campaigns;
- through Council's Environmental Health and Community Support Departments, continue to provide a range of activities which foster awareness through information, education and community action environments.

4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

Term	Definition
Legal drugs	Includes alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and prescription drugs
Illegal drugs	Includes drugs identified under the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act, 1981

5 HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act. Loddon Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee Health and Safety Representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.

6 REVIEW

The Director Community Wellbeing will review this policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after adoption of this current version.