



**Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training
Leader of the Legislative Council**

Our Ref: 61-21047

Mr Denis J Whitely
Executive Director
Council For The National Interest

Email: admin@cniwa.com.au

Dear Mr Whitely

Hon Sue Ellery MLC, Minister for Education and Training, has asked me to thank you for your letter dated 24 February 2020, and received in my office on 4 March 2020, detailing results of the Speaking Out Survey 2019 published by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The Minister shares your concerns about children and young people engaging in alcohol and other drug use.

The Department of Education provides support to schools to deliver structured education about alcohol and other drugs to students across all year levels. This includes alcohol and other drug education that is ongoing, age-appropriate, tailored to meet the specific learning needs of individual students, and linked to the Western Australian Curriculum Health Studies syllabus. This approach provides comprehensive support for student wellbeing and opportunities for continuous conversations and learning within the school community.

While any level of alcohol and other drug use among children and young people is concerning, there is some encouraging research reported by the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey that shows a decline in alcohol and other drug use among Western Australian school students. This report indicated that the number of Western Australian school students who had tried cannabis at some stage in their life dropped from 39.4% in 1996 to 16.8% in 2017.

This is, however, a whole of community issue, and not one that schools on their own are able to address. Where alcohol and other drugs are consumed openly in the home environment, it is challenging for schools and teachers to change student perceptions. That said, it does not stop teachers from sharing information about the harms associated with their use and supporting students with skills and strategies to say no to peers or family when they are invited to partake.

The State Government is committed to working with the community to educate young people about the dangers of drug use. You may be aware that the McGowan Government is delivering its coordinated and integrated \$42.5 million Methamphetamine Action Plan. This investment will provide increased support for individuals and families in crisis, as well as funding for initiatives that focus on more education, prevention and harm reduction.

Please contact Ms Kerry O'Hare, Manager, Road Safety and Drug Education, on 9402 6414 or at kerry.ohare@education.wa.edu.au if you would like further information about the approaches used in schools.

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Minister

Yours sincerely



LIZ CAREY
CHIEF OF STAFF

20 MAR 2020