

The Australian (illicit) drug policy timeline: 1985-2013

The Australian (illicit) drug policy timeline provides a list of key events, policy and legislative changes that have occurred in Australia between 1985 and February 28 2013. Events are listed by jurisdiction, at the national and state/ territory level. All events added in the last six months are highlighted in **blue**.

Here we list events in **Queensland only**. For events in other jurisdictions please see the relevant timeline.

DPMP will continue to update the timeline every June and December. Please feel free to email through any comments or suggested inclusions.

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Year	Queensland
2013	<p>First Report of the Queensland Mental Health Commission Advisory Committee released. Noted, that while still early, the relocation of the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Strategy Unit to create the Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Directorate was leading to improved outcomes for consumers, carers and families (Jan).</p> <p>The Newman Government released their six month action plan. Actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Queensland Mental Health Commission; • Reform Queensland Health's grants and service delivery contracts; • Commence a review to streamline contracts with nongovernment organisations (NGOs) reducing the number of individual contracts; • Release the government's youth strategy (Jan). <p>Old Police closed their most extensive drug investigation in recent years. Operations Juliet Cheshire and Juliet Cheshire 2 spanned a total of 18 months and sought to disrupt trafficking of methylamphetamine, MDMA (ecstasy), cocaine, and cannabis into the Fortitude Valley entertainment precinct. A total of 76 people were charged with 283 offences including 32 offences of trafficking dangerous drugs, 105 charges of supply dangerous drugs and 16 charges of major possession. Approximately \$2.5 million worth of drugs and several firearms were also seized (Feb).</p>
2012	<p>"Inquiry into severe substance dependence: a model for involuntary detoxification and rehabilitation" lapsed due to likely dissolution (Feb).</p> <p>Queensland Liberal National Party (LNP) elected, under Premier Campbell Newman. Key policy platforms included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a permanent major crime squad, based on the Gold Coast; • Take a hardline approach to drug traffickers & dealers who target children with tough sentencing laws; • Introduce tough new unexplained wealth and drug trafficker declarations; • Drug traffickers to serve at least 80% of their sentence before being eligible for parole • Establish a Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) (Mar 24). <p>The Federal Government announced that a Task Force would be established to examine organised crime on the Brisbane waterfront. This will begin in early 2013 (May).</p> <p>A heroin distribution network operating in south-east Queensland, with alleged links to Balkan crime groups, was detected following an 18-month covert investigation codenamed <i>Operation Storm</i>. The investigation was conducted by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC), Queensland Police Service, New South Wales Drug Squad and the Australian Federal Police said the network has operated for six years (2006-2012) (May).</p> <p>The Crime and Misconduct Commission's Proceeds of Crime team restrained the assets of the purported leader of the heroin distribution network (arrested through Operation Storm). The order covered assets including 2 properties, 5 cars and a boat: worth an estimated \$216,195 (Aug).</p> <p>Queensland State Budget 2012-2013 released. Outlined a number of areas of major cuts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of 14,000 FTE positions from the public service. • Queensland Health's Grant program cuts of \$120 million over four years. • Court Diversion and Referrals program cuts of \$5.015 million in 2012 – 2013 and \$10.226 million in 2013 – 2014. <p>Of particular note Premier Newman announced that post ten years of operation the Queensland drug courts would no longer be funded (the Murri and special circumstances courts were also de-funded) (Sep).</p> <p>QNADA released a new Policy Position – "The role of AOD in the Qld Mental Health Commission." This supported the Newman Government's proposed establishment of a Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC). But, while arguing inclusion of AOD within QMHC would be beneficial, it advocated for specialist AOD input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the specialist nature of AOD treatment services and its' unique policy framework, ongoing reform of the sector from within the QMHC will be best achieved by the assigning of responsibility and leadership to a designated position, such as a Deputy Commissioner for AOD (Sep). <p>Queensland Health contracted Siggins Miller to conduct "Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Residential Service Sector Mapping and Review Project."</p>

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	<p>Queensland Government released the discussion paper: "Establishment of the Queensland Mental Health Commission." This outlined the proposed model for the QMHC (with one month for feedback) (Oct).</p> <p>A new Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch located within the Health Services and Clinical Innovation Division came into existence. Responsibility for the AOD agenda, which had rested in one unit (the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Strategy Unit), was split across this and another branch within the Health Services and Clinical Innovation Division, under the rationale of better integrating the AOD agenda across the division. Accordingly responsibility is split across the branches for Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs and the Chief Health Officer in 4 separate teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead responsibility for ongoing AOD policy and AODS treatment is delivered by the Partnerships and Programs Team (Planning and Partnerships Unit, Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch) • AOD Prevention is delivered by the Intergovernmental Partnership Team (Preventive Health Unit, Chief Health Officer Branch) • Opioid treatment and monitoring is delivered by the Medicines, Regulation and Quality Team (Health Protection Unit, Chief Health Officer Branch) • Needle Syringe Programs are delivered by the Blood Borne Virus and Sexually Transmitted Infection team (Communicable Diseases Unit, Chief Health Officer Branch) (Oct). <p>Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2012 introduced outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a new 'aggravated supply' offence in the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 for drug traffickers who target children. Offenders are liable to a max penalty of life imprisonment for a schedule 1 drug and 25 yrs for a schedule 2 drug and • The conditions for the cessation of the Queensland's Drug Court by 30 June 2013 and transitional arrangements. A gradual approach to the termination of the Drug Court has been adopted to allow offenders, currently subject to an intensive drug rehabilitation order under the Drug Court Act 2000, time to complete their order (Nov). <p>Queensland Mental Health Commission Bill 2012 tabled, to establish:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a Mental Health Commission and (2) a Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Council (Nov). <p>Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission released a new report: 'Illicit drug markets in Queensland.' This noted the MDMA market is showing signs of a resurgence and is continuing to attract organised crime (Dec).</p>
2011	<p>Eight years post freezing the assets of Charles Edward Cannon, a convicted methamphetamine trafficker, the Qld Supreme Court made a landmark proceeds of crime ruling: <i>State of Qld v Cannon</i> [2011] QSC 075 (03/1166) Brisb Applegarth J 8/04/2011. The ruling marked the end of the state's longest and largest proceeds of crime battle and meant that Cannon, who it was alleged had earned \$27 million through his methamphetamine business, was ordered to pay back \$4.2 million in crime proceeds to the Qld government (Apr).</p> <p>Qld Government announced intention to put forward a new bill: 'Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2011' to ban 15 synthetic cannabinoids and to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to revise the definition of banned 'analogues'. The new law proposes to address the rise of new 'legal' substances that mimic known illicit substances, and eliminate the current requirement that an analogue is only banned when there is proof that the new substance has a similar chemical structure and effect to scheduled dangerous drugs. Under the proposal any substance that is 'intended' to have a substantially similar pharmacological effect as known illicit drugs will be banned. The proposed bill will be subject to consultation by stakeholders including the Sentencing Advisory Committee (Jun).</p> <p>Queensland Drug Action Plan 2011-2012 released. Plan seeks to reduce cannabis use and heavy drinking by 11% by 2012 (Jun).</p> <p>Crime and Misconduct Commission issue a 'schoolies alert' about GHB, due to recent peaks in supply and use (Sep).</p> <p>QNADA released a new report: "Building Capacity in Alcohol and Drug Services – The Queensland Experience – A Tough but Perfect Confluence" (Sep).</p> <p>QNADA report released: "Building Capacity in Non-government Alcohol and Drug Services – The Queensland Experience – A Tough but Perfect Confluence" (Oct).</p> <p>Premier Anna Bligh announced that the Queensland Government would establish an independent Mental Health Commission (the Commission) from 1 July 2012 to drive improved performance, coordination and transparency in the delivery of mental health services in Queensland (Oct).</p> <p>The Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Strategy Unit (AODTSU) became part of the Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Directorate (see also (Oct)).</p> <p>Queensland Mental Health Commission Advisory Committee was established (Nov).</p> <p>"Inquiry into severe substance dependence: a model for involuntary detoxification and rehabilitation" launched by the Health and Disabilities Committee of the Queensland Parliament. The inquiry sought to report on a model for the involuntary detoxification and rehabilitation of persons with severe substance dependence, including examining the potential benefits and costs of implementing a model for the involuntary medicated detoxification and rehabilitation of persons with severe substance dependence and examining initiatives in other Australian and international jurisdictions (Dec).</p>
2010	<p>Crime and Misconduct Commission enquiry into claims Gold Coast police officers have been involved with organised crime gangs, including outlaw bikies, importing drugs and dealing them through big Gold Coast nightclubs (Feb).</p> <p>Crime and Misconduct Commission Report released "Illicit drug markets in Queensland: A strategic assessment." Report identified that methyl-amphetamine continued to pose the highest risk to the Qld community, but was likely to pose a decreasing risk in the future due to law enforcement activities. But, the risk of two drugs was</p>

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	<p>deemed to be increasing: cocaine due to increased supply/use and ecstasy due to changes in patterns of use namely use of multiple tablets in a session (Feb).</p> <p>Queensland's chief health officer, Dr Jeannette Young, announced that doctors had to be more careful when prescribing drugs containing pseudoephedrine (PSE), which could be used in the production of illicit amphetamines. Data from pharmacy audits, data from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and information from the Queensland Police Service State Drug Investigation Unit had indicated increased repeat and bulk prescriptions (Apr).</p> <p><i>Criminal Organisation Act 2009</i> commenced. Act seeks to increase Qld police powers to disrupt & restrict the activities of organisations involved in serious criminal activity. The Act enables the Police Commissioner to apply to the Supreme Court to declare an organisation a 'criminal organisation' for a 5 year period; to enact control orders against individual members, such as preventing association with any member of a 'criminal organisation'; to provide for public safety and fortification removal orders; and to create a new offence of contravening a control order, which carries a maximum penalty of 3 years' jail for the first offence & 5 years' jail for subsequent offences (15 Apr).</p> <p>Operation Warrior, the largest organised crime investigation in the Crime and Misconduct Commission's history detected a national poly-drug syndicate (methamphetamine, ecstasy and cannabis) linked to outlaw motorcycle gangs that crossed south-east Queensland, North Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne. Large quantities of drugs were also seized including 3544 ecstasy tablets and 25 litres of precursor GBL (capable of producing 60 litres of GHB) (May).</p> <p>Inquiry into addressing cannabis-related harm in Queensland received public submissions and held public inquiries.</p> <p>Chief Justice of Queensland, Paul de Jersey, addressed the 12th International Criminal Law Congress in Brisbane spoke of the benefits of considering creative solutions to illicit drugs. He commended the Swiss response to the heroin problem, through heroin prescription and provision of supervised injecting rooms, and the Portuguese decriminalisation of illicit drug use (Oct).</p>
2009	<p>The Courier Mail commenced a three month series of articles called "The Drugs Scourge" which aimed to "spur public debate and drive government action on ecstasy and amphetamine use." Key articles included "drugs menace uncovered," "bars, clubs awash with drugs" and "drug users' Russian roulette." The Courier Mail campaigned to get pill presses banned (Mar).</p> <p>Queensland Legislative Assembly referred a paper by Drug Free Australia "Cannabis: suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects" to the Social Development Committee for investigation and report. The enquiry was explicitly asked to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risks associated with cannabis use, particularly for youth; & • Strategies to reduce cannabis use in Queensland (20 May). <p><i>Telecommunications Interception Act 2009</i> commenced. Act enabled use of telecommunications interception by Qld Police Service and Qld Crime Commission to target criminals involved in serious and organised crime (18 Jun).</p> <p>A two-year joint operation between Queensland Police and the Australian Crime Commission claimed to have smashed a Goldcoast based drug-trafficking syndicate that included senior members of the Finks outlaw motorcycle club. The operation culminated with the arrest of 41 people after two Finks clubhouses and the homes of members and associates were raided (Nov).</p>
2008	<p>Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2007 passed. Bill reclassified MDMA and PMA (an amphetamine type drug) from schedule 2 to schedule 1 dangerous drugs. Maximum penalties for possession, supply and trafficking increased from 20 to 25 years (Feb).</p> <p>Report released on the Queensland Drug Court: "The Queensland Drug Court: a recidivism study of the first 100 graduates." Study tracked recidivism over a minimum of two years post-graduation, making this evaluation the longest follow-up of Australian drug court graduates to date. Report found that after leaving the drug court program 59% of those who graduated had been reconvicted of a new offence within two years compared to 77% of terminates. Average time to first offence was 139 days for terminates compared to 379 days for graduates (Mar).</p> <p>Media reports claimed Qld Police in Fortitude Valley were thankful that 80% Fortitude Valley patrons used illicit drugs not alcohol and that drugs made them much easier to manage than alcohol (Aug).</p> <p>Research from QADREC showed ecstasy had become the drug of choice for young Queenslanders following the Rudd Governments 70% tax hike in alcopops (Sep).</p> <p>Queensland Health adopted a dual diagnosis policy including that all mental health and alcohol and drug specialists screen everyone at their initial presentation for co-morbid disorders and that no one be excluded on the basis of co-morbidity (Sep).</p> <p>Qld Police report that Lebanese criminals with links to the Sydney underworld were trying to take part in the Gold Coast ecstasy trade (Oct).</p> <p>Queensland Drug Strategy 2006-2010 Midpoint Evaluation released. Key achievements included the adoption of the Queensland Corrective Drug Strategy in 2006, the role out of a number of diversionary programs e.g. QMERIT and a decrease by approximately 20% in clan labs located in Qld which was attributed in part to Project STOP, collaboration between police, government and industry and the aggressive pursuit of proceeds of crime (Oct).</p>
2007	<p>Queensland Police commenced random roadside drug testing for cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy (Dec).</p> <p>Amendments to the <i>Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987</i> the it illegal to publish or possess documents containing instructions about the manufacturing or illicit drugs (punishable with up to 25 years imprisonment) and supply any items for illicit drug use (punishable with up to 15 years imprisonment) (??).</p>

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	The Ice Breaker Strategy Taskforce completed its report to the Qld Government. Key recommendations included a targeted young adult illicit drug campaign, legislation banning the retail display and supply of ice pipes, a 3-year pilot study at 2 hospital emergency departments for ATS responses and expansion of Alcohol and Drug Adolescent Withdrawal Service outreach services (Jun).
2006	<p>Amendments to the <i>Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998</i> prohibited the sale or display of ice pipes or bongs and made such offences punishable with a \$10,500 fine (Jan).</p> <p>Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies Inc (QNADA) commenced (May).</p> <p>QMERIT (Queensland Magistrate's Early Referral into Treatment) program introduced (Jul).</p> <p>Fourth Queensland Drug Strategy 2006-2009 released (Oct).</p> <p>Criminal Code (Drink Spiking) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006 adopted. Bill created a new offence of spiking a person's drink with an intoxicating substance with intent to harm the person (maximum penalty 5 years imprisonment) (Oct).</p> <p>Qld Premier and Minister for Health established an Ice Breaker Strategy Taskforce chaired by Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young to oversee the development and implementation of a Queensland Government's Ice-Breaker Strategy to reduce uptake, use and harms associated with methamphetamine use (Dec).</p> <p>Queensland Corrective Services Drug Strategy adopted. Strategy enshrined "a zero-tolerance approach to drug use within a context of harm minimization" and included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supply reduction initiatives e.g. drug testing, staff searches, and use of drug detection dogs and ionscan devices • demand reduction initiatives e.g. provision of range of treatment options plus drug treatment units and a Drug Free Incentive Program (DFIP) • harm reduction initiatives e.g. pharmacotherapy maintenance treatment for eligible short term offenders and peer education on the harms associated with drug use, their effects and issues concerning overdose and unsafe injecting practices.
2005	<p>Project STOP commenced by Pharmacy Guild of Queensland – used online database to track sales of pseudoephedrine. Project STOP was a partnership between Qld Police and the Pharmacy Guild (Nov).</p> <p><i>Police Powers and Responsibilities (Drug Detection Dogs) Amendment Act 2005</i> passed to enable police use of drug detection dogs without a warrant on persons, vehicles and things in public places, licensed premises, and at sporting and entertainment events (Nov).</p>
2004	New user group established - Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuIHN) (Jul).
2003	Illicits Drug Court Diversion Program introduced (Mar)
2002	<i>Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act 2002</i> adopted allowing the court to confiscate property derived from criminal activity such as drug trafficking without charge or conviction.
2001	<p>COAG-IDDI agreement signed (Mar)</p> <p>Police Diversion for Minor Drug Offences and Drug Court Program introduced (Jun)</p> <p><i>Drugs Misuse (Amphetamine Offences) Amendment Act 2001</i> passed. Act reclassified amphetamine and methyl amphetamine from schedule 2 to schedule 1 dangerous drugs and increased maximum penalties for possession, supply and trafficking from 20 to 25 years. Cited rationale was the increasingly serious problem of amphetamine use and manufacturing in Queensland (Sep).</p> <p>The 2nd Youth Drug Summit - involved 50 young people. Recommended that needed more incentives to obtain work, more youth specific withdrawal options and flexibility in treatment (23 & 24 October).</p>
2000	Queensland Government introduced a Drug Court (Jun).
1999	<p>Queensland Drug Summit held with a focus on youth issues. Involved 70 delegates – politicians, youth workers, youth and community workers. Resulted in establishment of 24 projects state-wide in partnership with three peak youth and indigenous bodies (16-17 March).</p> <p>Third Queensland Drug Strategy launched: 'Beyond a Quick Fix: Queensland Drug Strategic Framework 1999/2000 to 2003/2004.' Focus of strategy was on youth and early intervention (Jun).</p> <p>Queensland Drug Coordinating Committee (QDCC) established to coordinate and oversee implementation of Queensland drug strategy.</p> <p>Inter-governmental committee, YADA (Youth Alcohol and Drug Action), established by QDCC to consider youth drug issues (Nov)</p>
1998	Brisbane Lord Mayor's Illicit Drug Task Force convened
1997	
1996	Party drug "Fantasy" or "GHB" hit front page news after a mass overdose at a Broadbeach venue in the Gold Coast put eight people on life-support systems (Oct).
1995	Second Queensland Drug Strategy released

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1994	
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1989	Criminal Justice Commission established as a result of the Fitzgerald Inquiry Changes to Drugs Misuse Act (as amended) 1989 enabled supply of needles & introduction of Needle and Syringe Exchange Program in Qld
1988	Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct (Fitzgerald Inquiry) report released User group - Queensland IV AIDS Association (QuIVAA) formed
1987	Changes to Drugs Misuse Act (as amended) 1987 established a new offence for inappropriate disposal of needles and syringes (Sep)
1986	Drugs Misuse Act 1986 adopted Possession of needles and syringes decriminalised First distribution programs of single syringes commenced
1985	