

Framing drug policy reform: Third-sector advocacy and the 2024 New South Wales Drug Summit

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Introduction: *Internationally, drug policy remains marked by tensions between punitive legal responses and health-oriented reform. The 2024 New South Wales (NSW) Drug Summit provided a deliberative forum for third-sector organisations and community to articulate policy priorities. This study examined how the third-sector organisations framed drug-related problems, their causes and proposed solutions, and assessed the extent to which these perspectives were reflected in the summit's formal outcome document—the Report on the 2024 NSW Drug Summit.*

Methods: *We conducted a qualitative document analysis of 33 third-sector advocacy documents produced in the lead-up to the summit, examined alongside the report. A dual framing analysis applying Entman's four-frame model and Benford and Snow's collective action frame typology was used to identify alignment and divergence across the two corpora.*

Key Findings: *Advocacy documents converged on a structural framing of drug-related harm, emphasising criminalisation, discriminatory policing, systemic underinvestment and stigma, and assigning responsibility to specific legal and institutional arrangements. They advanced rights-based evaluations and prioritised decriminalisation, expanded harm reduction, increased treatment access, and strengthened peer-led services. The report framed problems as arising from service fragmentation, assigning diffuse causal responsibility while focussing on less contentious recommendations.*

Discussions and Conclusions: *Although third-sector organisations articulated cohesive, evidence-informed and justice-oriented reform agendas, these were only partially reflected in the report. Strategic filtering and selective uptake highlight persistent power asymmetries in participatory policymaking.*

Implications: *Our findings underscore the need for more transparent mechanisms to track how stakeholder perspectives, including community stories and priorities, are incorporated or excluded within policy processes. Strengthening accountability and embedding substantive civil-society participation may improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of future drug policy reform efforts.*

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