

prevention post

NEWSLETTER OF THE PREMIER'S DRUG PREVENTION COUNCIL

5 issue

AUGUST 2006

Message from the Chairperson



The Premier's Drug Prevention Council (PDPC) recently celebrated an anniversary – it is five years since the joint sitting of the Victorian Parliament was convened to address drug issues, which resulted in the creation of the PDPC.

The original aim set by the PDPC was to strive to prevent alcohol and drug-related problems from occurring in the first place. Experience over the past five years has taught us that equally important to this goal is aiming to prevent and reduce the harms of drug use when, regrettably, drug-related problems do occur.

The Terms of Reference of the PDPC are to:

1. Provide expert advice on effective, evidence-based prevention programs, drawing on international research and best practice, and which are appropriate to the Victorian context.
2. Advise government on where additional primary prevention efforts should be directed.
3. Commission or contribute to research and other projects to inform best practice on prevention.
4. Inform and educate the Victorian community about risk and protective factors associated with drug use and effective drug prevention responses.
5. Engage the business, media and philanthropic sectors to harness and further support drug prevention strategies.

Now in its second term, the PDPC has a considerable program of work underway, a terrific raft of achievements to boast, and exciting future prospects to contemplate and plan for. Certainly, the environment for drug prevention has changed in many ways over the past five years in Victoria. When the PDPC first came together in 2001, it was faced with a heroin epidemic that was claiming the lives of more young Victorians each year than the road toll. Within a year, the heroin crisis had eased to give way to the emergence of other drugs, particularly amphetamines and ecstasy and related drugs. In more recent times, cannabis use has become an issue of growing public concern and the PDPC has also turned its attention in this direction. The Government's reforms to the regulation of tobacco and its no-smoking campaigns have seen major progress in this area of drug prevention. However, the harmful consumption of alcohol remains an area where greater prevention effort is required, and this will need to be a focus for the PDPC, and the whole Victorian community, well into the foreseeable future. The PDPC is currently contributing to the Government's response to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption, and will be guided by this report in future efforts to prevent alcohol-related harm.

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Premier's Drug
Prevention Council

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – CONTINUED

To those who have been involved in or contributed to the work of the PDPC over the past five years, I offer my sincere thanks and applause. There is much that we as a Council have learnt about 'what it takes' to effectively do drug prevention and much that we continue to aspire to achieve. I look forward to sharing this commitment and the effort with you.

Rob Moodie

Chair, Premier's Drug Prevention Council

Priorities for the current term

The PDPC's five strategic priorities for its second term are:

Intelligence gathering – to ensure that drug prevention directions and activities are informed by comprehensive intelligence and evidence-based practice. Strategies include undertaking research, evaluation, benchmarking and monitoring activities.

Communications – to promote community awareness of alcohol and drug related issues and how they can be prevented. Major strategies include supporting the DrugInfo Clearinghouse, promoting DirectLine 1800 888 236, supporting ongoing community awareness campaigns, and providing training on drug prevention to workers in health and community services and local government.

Community drug prevention – to develop a model to embed drug prevention in programs at a community level, address risk and protective factors and leverage change at a population level. This will also involve working across government with key departments, Victoria Police, local government and Department of Human Services program areas.

Advocacy – to provide leadership at state and national levels in drug prevention policy, strategic directions and activities. This includes building links with national research centres and fostering partnerships with relevant agencies in Victoria and other states.

Connectus – PDPC's flagship project, *Connectus*, works with the business community to embed, in a sustainable way, a major employment and mentoring program for young people at risk.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP



Dr Rob Moodie, Chief Executive Officer, VicHealth (Chairperson)

Dr Rob Moodie has been CEO of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation since 1998.

He graduated in medicine from the University of Melbourne in 1976 and later trained in Tropical Medicine at Paris University and Public Health at Harvard University.

Since 1979 he has worked for Save the Children Fund, and Medicins San Frontieres in the Sudan, for Congress, the community-controlled Aboriginal Health Service in Alice Springs, and for the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Joint UN Program on AIDS (UNAIDS) in Uganda, Cameroon and Geneva.

He is a member of several Boards and Councils including DepressioNet, the Foundation for Young Australians and Ormond College.



Paul Briggs OAM

Paul Briggs is the President of Rumbalara Football and Netball Club and consultant on Indigenous issues. He is also Convener of the Victorian Aboriginal Leadership Network,

Chairman of First Nation Foundation and a member of the University of Melbourne Council.



Neil Comrie AO, APM

Neil Comrie has a long-term interest in the welfare of young people. He is a former member of the Board of Directors of Open Family and led the Victoria Police Delta Task Force from

1982–84 to investigate child exploitation. He was the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police from 1993 to 2001 and Visiting Professor, Faculty of Business and Law at Victoria University from 2001 to 2005.



Professor Margaret Hamilton OAM, Chair, Multiple and Complex Needs Panel

Professor Hamilton is a member of the Prime Minister's National Council on Drugs and the National Expert Advisory Committee on Illicit

Drugs, Deputy Chair of the National Expert Advisory Committee on Alcohol, Chair of the Drug Advisory Committee – Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, and Chair of the Royal Women's Hospital Ethics Committee.



**Margaret Harding, Magistrate,
Drug Court Magistrate, Dandenong
Magistrates' Court**

Margaret Harding has 14 years experience as a Magistrate, initially assigned to the Children's Court from 1991 to 1996 and then until 1998 to the Civil Division and Crimes Family Violence Division, Melbourne Magistrates' Court. From 1999 to 2002, Margaret was assigned to Dandenong Magistrates' Court and, since 2002, has been assigned to the Drug Court Pilot Program at the Dandenong Magistrates' Court.



**Janine Kirk, Executive Director,
Committee for Melbourne**

Janine Kirk is Chair of the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau, immediate Past President of Berry Street Victoria, an advisory board member of the University of Sydney/Australian National University Centre for the Mind Management Board, a board member of the Victorian Endowment for Science, Technology and Innovation, and a member of the Victoria Harbour Advisory Group.



Frank McGuire

Frank McGuire is Managing Partner of *george*, a corporate think tank specialising in strategy, communications and advertising. A former journalist, producer and communications advisor, Frank McGuire has been awarded a Walkley Award and a Human Rights Award and was nominated for a United Nations Media Peace Prize.



**Phong Nguyen, Director, Springvale
Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association**

Phong Nguyen is President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia – Victorian Chapter, and Director of the Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual

Assistance Association. His extensive community involvement includes Westernport Drug and Alcohol Services, Coordinator of South Eastern Region's Indo-Chinese Young Offenders Program, and Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities Council Victoria.



**Kay Rundle, Chief Executive Officer,
City of Greater Geelong**

With 20 years experience in local government, Kay Rundle was the first female to be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer for the City of Greater Geelong, Victoria's second largest city. Greater Geelong is the largest regional local government organisation in Victoria and administers a budget of \$195 million with 1,890 staff and 82 business units, to a population of 198,164 people and more than 10,000 businesses.



**Bill Stronach, Chief Executive Officer,
Australian Drug Foundation**

Bill Stronach has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) since 1989. The ADF is Australia's leading non-government organisation concerned with the prevention of drug problems. Prior to this position, Bill was Director of Grassmere Youth Services, working with juvenile offenders, homeless and sexually abused young people.



**Peter Wearne, Manager, Residential Unit and
Special Projects, Youth Substance Abuse Service**

Peter Wearne is a youth worker with the Youth Substance Abuse Service and Chairperson of the Yarra Drug and Health Forum. Peter has a strong interest in drug treatment and prevention issues.



PDPC initiatives

SCHOOLIES WEEK

Schoolies Week continues to be a popular post-exam celebration for young Victorian school leavers. Three Victorian shires – Bass Coast Shire, Mornington Peninsula Shire and Surf Coast Shire attract hundreds of young people to Schoolies Week annually and a significant number of young Victorians travel interstate to Queensland and NSW to participate in Schoolies Week.

During these celebrations some young people find themselves in risky situations or partaking in risky behaviours, often involving alcohol and other drugs.

For the last three years, the PDPC has funded strategies in response to community concerns about the risky behaviours of young people during Schoolies Week, including providing information to students and parents, advertising and assisting communities to manage the event.



Schoolies Week 2005 awards

In June 2005, the PDPC convened an interstate forum to share strategies to manage and minimise the harms associated with Schoolies Week. A key outcome was agreement that an ongoing coordinated Victorian approach would help young people and communities prepare for Schoolies Week. The PDPC leads this coordinated approach through the Schoolies Week Inter-agency Steering Committee (SWISC), which comprises key state and local government agencies, with the Office for Youth facilitating input from young people.

The SWISC has commenced planning for Schoolies Week 2006. Initiatives for 2006 comprise a set of key initiatives that will ensure Schoolies Week in Victoria is again a safe and successful event. The initiatives aim to:

1. Provide detailed and timely information to Year 12 students planning to participate in Schoolies Week 2006.
2. Provide accessible information to influencers and parents.
3. Engage the media in positive portrayals of Schoolies Week.
4. Support Bass Coast, Surf Coast and Mornington Peninsula shires in their support to local businesses and residents.
5. Gather intelligence to identify what works and what doesn't, for future Schoolies Week preparation and management.

Information about Schoolies Week 2006 can be found at the Youth Central website at www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au.

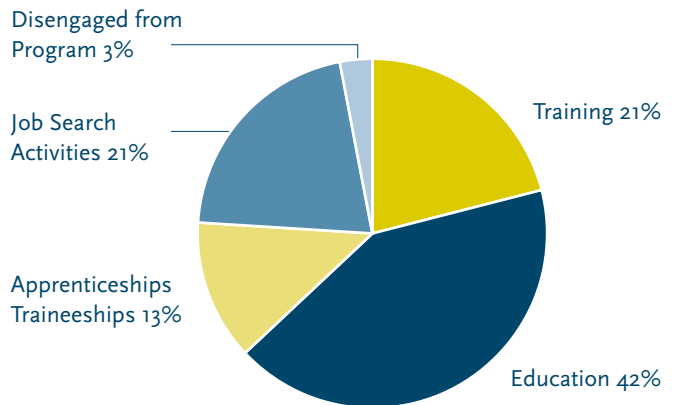
CONNECTUS UPDATE

Connectus helps at risk young people access employment, education and training.

Connectus delivered four projects in 2005 and six projects in 2006 in communities experiencing low school retention, high youth unemployment and skills shortages. The 2006 projects were located in Altona, Brimbank, Melton, Darebin, Hume and Dandenong.

The outcomes are shown below and translate into 76 per cent of the participants moving into education, employment or training.

CONNECTUS PARTICIPANT PATHWAYS JULY 2006





Transport Industry Presentation Night May 2006

These positive outcomes are the result of collaboration with key stakeholders in each of the local communities, in particular, the Brimbank Melton, Inner North and South East Local Learning Employment Networks; youth and community agencies; schools and Neighbourhood Renewal projects. Delivery of the program by Connectus staff has allowed them to develop strong relationships with young people and support them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

In addition, Connectus contracted Victoria University, under the supervision of Dr Robyn Broadbent, to map similar projects and evaluate the Connectus model over a 12-month period concluding in September 2006. Some of the recommendations from this work include:

- clarification via an extensive mapping exercise that Connectus is unique and exists within a maze of short-term programs that young people cannot negotiate without adequate support
- diversity of young people and their individual employment needs means that Connectus cannot be owned by business, the community or education sectors on their own
- the model is best suited to be coordinated from local areas to ensure strong links with local schools, agencies and business.

Phase 3 of Connectus commenced in January 2006 with the aim of delivering four projects throughout the year; two in the transport industry in the west and two in the construction industry in the southeast. The objective of this strategy is to provide young people with job opportunities in skill shortage industries in regions that experience high youth unemployment and low school retention.

The Business Advisory Council (BAC), chaired by Neil Comrie AO APM, plays an active role in Connectus. BAC members act as MCs on the presentation nights, and Bill Noonan from the Transport Workers Union, Bill McHarg from Colliers International and Sandy Grant from CBUS have hosted industry breakfasts that aim to engage business in providing apprenticeships and traineeships to Connectus participants.

In May 2006, the Department for Victorian Communities announced that Connectus would receive funds from the Workforce Participation Grant Scheme. These funds will be used to work with Link and Workplace Connect (group training companies) to provide support and placement of young people into apprenticeships or traineeships.

Kestrel Video Productions has been contracted to produce a 12-minute video showing the interventions used to engage and support young people over the 12 months. The video will be a training and promotion tool for business, schools and agencies interested in referring young people, recruiting a young person or delivering the program in the future.

For the rest of 2006, Connectus will continue to work with key stakeholders from government, the community and education sectors to develop and fine-tune the model. The PDPC will investigate options to determine the best outcome for the program's future when the pilot period concludes in 2007.

DARRYL'S STORY

I was 15 when I started with Connectus after being expelled from school. Connectus offered a four-week pre-employment training program that provided a hands-on learning environment. This really motivated me.

I developed leadership skills that boosted my confidence and brought to my life a sense of maturity and control, especially in my career pathway. I successfully completed a pre-apprenticeship in 2005. After job search activities with the Connectus Youth Support & Training Officer I was able to secure a carpentry apprenticeship with a small business in my local area – a rare opportunity. I am now enjoying the work I am doing and the people I work with. I have my learners and am working towards obtaining my licence. My self confidence and sense of motivation have continued to increase along with my capacity to plan for the future and set goals such as saving for a car – goals that weren't possible 18 months ago.

HEALTHY BABIES, HEALTHY PREGNANCIES

As part of the *Koori Alcohol and Drug Plan 2003–04*, developed by the Koori Drug Strategy Advisory Committee, a consortia lead by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) was commissioned to undertake research on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. As part of this work, VACCHO, in consultation with the Koori community in general and health workers in particular, has developed a resource on healthy babies and healthy pregnancies.

The *Healthy babies, healthy pregnancies* resource includes a flip chart, poster and pamphlet for use by Indigenous health and community workers. It provides a tool for informing and discussing with families and the community how to ensure healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. The resource explains the relationship between the intake of food, alcohol and other drugs and the health of the foetus. The underpinning message is that healthy pregnancies and healthy babies are the responsibility of the whole community.

It is hoped that the flip chart model might be applied more broadly in the future.

A NEW TOOLKIT FOR DRUG PREVENTION

The PDPC has developed a new resource guide for local communities to help them plan and implement drug prevention efforts. This resource guide was prepared by Associate Professor John Toumbourou, who is based at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, is a VicHealth Senior Research Fellow and is also Chief Executive Officer, Communities That Care, Australia.

The resource guide has four main sections:

- a guide to evidence-based strategies to prevent drug-related harm
- a guide to integrating with existing systems to build effective prevention partnerships
- a guide to assessing community characteristics relevant to drug and alcohol related harm
- a guide to developing community drug prevention plans that can be monitored and evaluated.

It is based on an extensive literature review of evaluations of drug prevention interventions and recommends interventions that show good evidence for preventing alcohol and or drug related harm, or for reducing associated influencing factors. The guide also identifies good practice principles emerging from these interventions and provides examples supportive of promising practice in the Australian context.

The resource will be distributed to local communities throughout Victoria in 2006–07 and will be accompanied by a short training course focusing on drug prevention capacity building at the local level.

GROGWATCH

Alcohol is the second highest cause of death and hospitalisation in Australia and research indicates that alcohol advertising has a powerful influence on our attitudes toward, and consumption of alcohol.

COMMUNITY ALCOHOL ACTION NETWORK (CAAN) WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE AUSTRALIAN DRUG FOUNDATION IN 2003 IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S CULTURE OF HIGH RISK DRINKING AND THE WAYS IN WHICH ALCOHOL IS MARKETED AND SUPPLIED IN THE COMMUNITY. CAAN IS AIMING TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM CHANGE IN ALCOHOL-RELATED ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR. ITS CHARTER IS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE TOLERANCE FOR UNSAFE DRINKING IN AUSTRALIA, TO ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGE, AND TO PROMOTE ACTION BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

GrogWatch is CAAN's weekly e-bulletin. With 2,000 subscribers and supporters *GrogWatch* raises awareness of alcohol issues, particularly the marketing and supply of alcohol, calls for readers to support community and advocacy campaigns, and plays a role in monitoring the industry. *GrogWatch* also provides links and support for people working to prevent alcohol problems.

The PDPC has funded the CAAN's *Grogwatch* for the last two years and will continue to do so, supporting CAAN's important role in awareness raising, advocacy and monitoring with regard to alcohol promotion and policy.

GROGWATCH HIGHLIGHTS 2005–06

- Maintained pressure on alcohol marketers by drawing attention to particular promotions, advertisements and articles that promote risky drinking.
- Published a regular column by Sarah Jaggard, on issues such as parent involvement in teenage drinking, the problems of serving responsibly and hazardous practices by bar managers.
- Received an increasing number of requests for help from readers or alerts to problems or issues for investigation, including four requests to help readers lodge objections to liquor licences in their area.
- Included a column, 'Do parents need health warnings on their children drinking?' which was reprinted in *At the Cross*, the newsletter of the Mary of the Cross Centre

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee has been 'impressed with the advocacy work done by CAAN and its efforts to raise awareness with regard to alcohol-related issues in conjunction with the Australian Drug Foundation' and has recommended in its report on the *Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption* that 'The Victorian Government investigate ongoing support of the Community Alcohol Action Network'.

CAAN contacts:

Website: www.caan.adf.org.au/

Phone: (03) 9278 8124

E-mail: CAAN@adf.org.au

REVIEW OF DRUGINFO CLEARINGHOUSE

Over the past 12 months, the DrugInfo Clearinghouse has raised the profile and dialogue about drug prevention in Victoria and nationally.

THE DRUGINFO CLEARINGHOUSE WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE PDPC IN 2002 TO FACILITATE THE COLLECTION, COLLATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISSEMINATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED DRUG PREVENTION INFORMATION. THIS OCCURS THROUGH AN INTEGRATED SERVICE, COMPRISING A RESOURCE CENTRE, WEBSITE, PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING THE QUARTERLY PRODUCED *PREVENTION RESEARCH EVALUATION REPORT*, THE DRUGINFO NEWSLETTER AND FACT SHEETS.

In 2005, the PDPC recommended that a review of the DrugInfo Clearinghouse be undertaken to assess its effectiveness and make recommendations about its future directions. This is the first external review of the DrugInfo Clearinghouse and was undertaken by an expert panel.

Completed in 2006, the expert review panel made recommendations to enhance an already valuable service, and gave an overall positive review, stating that:

The DrugInfo Clearinghouse is a unique service offering professionals, families and the community an opportunity to access alcohol and drug prevention information in a number of important and innovative ways. It is staffed by a group of committed people who are conscious of the need to be flexible about the changing environment in which they work. It is housed within an organisation that has long had one of the most respected reputations within the community-based drug and alcohol service sector.

That it should continue is self-evident. As was abundantly demonstrated to the panel, this is a unique service, and the people of Victoria are fortunate in having a state government sufficiently foresighted to fund drug and alcohol prevention information.

DRUG PREVENTION RESEARCH ACTION PLAN

One of the five strategic priorities of the PDPC is to ensure that drug prevention research directions and activities are informed by national and international intelligence and evidence-based practice. To this end, the PDPC endorsed the development of a Drug Prevention Research Action Plan and an Indigenous Drug Prevention Research Action Plan. These research action plans will ensure that research undertaken by the PDPC is informed by a strategic framework, building on and adding value to the existing drug prevention evidence base.

This project has involved a forum convened by the PDPC, involving leading experts in the field of drug prevention, and discussions with members of the Indigenous Community. The project is now in its second stage and will assess the research priorities identified at the forum against a stocktake of drug prevention research gaps identified in the literature.

The Drug Prevention Research Action Plan project will involve:

- analysing research needs and gaps identified by drug prevention research published over the past five years in Australia and other comparable jurisdictions
- identifying likely future trends and issues pivotal to drug prevention research
- developing a drug prevention research action plan for the PDPC, based on the above analysis.

The Indigenous Drug Prevention Research Action Plan will be informed by:

- a review of drug prevention research published over the past five years that is relevant to the Indigenous community
- a series of community consultations in metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria
- likely future trends and issues pivotal to Indigenous drug prevention research.

The first stage of the project is due for completion early in 2007.

DEVELOPING A YOUTH DRUG REPORTING SYSTEM

In 2003, the PDPC commissioned the Centre for Adolescent Health to review existing drug reporting systems and develop recommendations for a data collection and monitoring strategy for drug prevention in Victoria. The resulting report identified the need for data collection systems to better target at risk young people and recommended that a new youth drug

reporting system be developed to monitor drug use trends and harms in vulnerable youth populations.

In 2005, the PDPC commissioned Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Incorporated, in conjunction with the Youth Substance Abuse Centre and the Key Centre for Women's Health at Melbourne University, to design and develop a survey system to monitor illicit drug use trends and harms in vulnerable at risk youth populations, particularly in the 12–24 year age group. The survey will be known as the Youth Drug Reporting System (YDRS).

The YDRS will address an identified gap in drug monitoring and surveillance among young people and will target groups that other surveys do not currently capture. It will serve as a strategic early warning system, identifying emerging trends of local concern in at risk youth drug use and related harms, and will complement the existing Illicit Drug Reporting System.

The YDRS project involves a two-year study with data collected annually. The purpose of the YDRS is to:

- monitor drug use trends and harms in vulnerable, hard to reach youth populations
- better target those at risk youth sub-populations that existing drug monitoring systems don't adequately capture (such as homeless youth)
- provide qualitative accounts of new trends and patterns in specific geographic areas and sub-populations
- examine developmental pathways resulting in harmful drug use by at-risk populations.

The project is currently in the design phase.

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT OF ECSTASY AND RELATED DRUGS

In 2004, the Victorian Youth Alcohol and Drug Survey revealed increasing rates of both lifetime and recent ecstasy use among younger age groups. The survey also found that 60 per cent of respondents reported the use of ecstasy amongst their peers. While traditionally used in the dance and rave scene, recent studies into ecstasy and related drug (ERDs) use show that it is now being used beyond these venues and is more apparent in settings such as clubs, bars and people's homes.

According to the *Victorian Party Drug Trends Study 2004*, regular ecstasy users are likely to be educated, employed or in tertiary education, are unlikely to have criminal convictions, are polydrug users, and are aged in their mid-twenties.

To better understand the changing nature of ERD use and to inform the development of relevant drug prevention approaches, the PDPC commissioned The Centre for Youth Drug Studies (Australian Drug Foundation), in collaboration with Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Inc. and the National Drug Research Institute in Perth, to examine the social and cultural context of ERDs use.

The study involved:

- a review of relevant literature about the culture and context of ERD use in Australia
- an examination of the patterns of ERD use, including setting of use, with whom use occurs, time and frequency of use, the profile and social networks of people who use ERDs, and how this changes over time and varies according to age and gender
- an analysis of the social and cultural context of ERD users, including the role and function ERDs play in people's lives and how this changes over time and according to age and gender
- a description of consumers' perceived future patterns of ERD use, including alcohol and other drugs
- identification of harms that consumers associate with ERD use and the strategies they employ to reduce or manage those harms
- development of recommendations about prevention approaches, including when and where these approaches would be most appropriate, and recommendations for further research.

Data for the study was collected using a mixed methodology involving fieldwork observations at 25 settings, focus group interviews with 52 participants who were current ERD users, ten in-depth case studies with current and ex-ERD users, and interviews with eight key experts who have contact with people who use ERDs.

The study provides valuable insights into the context of ERD use and the importance of peer and web-based communications for informing users of related harms. The research will inform prevention and harm minimisation messages. The report of the study is due for release later this year.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO PUBLIC DRUG USE

The PDPC recently commissioned The Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health Ltd to investigate local solutions to public drug use in Victoria.

In recent times, there appears to be a combination of factors driving sporadic changes to the prevalence of public drug use in

many Victorian localities. These factors appear to include more mobile drug dealing, the breaking up and 'displacement' of local drug markets by police operations, and fluctuations in the supply of heroin and other drugs.

The continuing prevalence of public injecting in Victoria highlights that while appropriate interventions are in place to reduce the harms associated with many aspects of injecting drug use, such as providing clean injecting equipment, safer disposal facilities, the provision of safer user advice, and overdose response workers, there remains no formally recognised, holistic public health response to the phenomena of public drug use.

Injecting in public poses risks for injecting drug users and for the wider community. Local responses are needed to minimise these risks, particularly the risk of blood borne virus infection, overdose and the public nuisance created by drug affected people.

The Local Solutions to Public Drug Use research project will assess ongoing community concern about public drug use and propose local solutions to address those concerns within the existing service, treatment and resource parameters.

DIRECTLINE

To ensure that Victorian's know where to get help for alcohol and drug issues when they occur, the PDPC provides support to DirectLine.

DirectLine is the central 24-hour, seven-day-a-week telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone in Victoria with an alcohol or drug related concern. Staffed by professional counsellors at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Incorporated, it is an important part of the alcohol and other drug treatment service system.

The helpline model is designed to provide timely, accessible and flexible responses to the diverse needs of callers seeking assistance. In addition to its counselling and support role, DirectLine has an important role in educating and assisting callers to access treatment and support services in the local community.

Continuing the trend over recent years, in 2005–06, problems involving alcohol and cannabis were most frequently reported by both drug users and concerned family members. Calls regarding amphetamines and ecstasy and related drug and 'ice', have also begun to rise compared with previous years.

DirectLine continues to develop new responses to alcohol and drug problems in the Victorian community and strategies to

increase access to specialist treatment. New initiatives this year have included:

- a 24/7 program of live online counselling – Counselling Online – using text-based counselling over the Internet
- piloting of a shared-care model for clients in rural withdrawal settings, using enhanced telephone support
- research to improve our understanding of client treatment pathways and referral outcomes.

DIRECTLINE RESEARCH

Only a small amount of research has been undertaken regarding alcohol and drug helplines, and we know little about the role of DirectLine in the treatment pathway of substance users

In 2005, the PDPC funded two studies to investigate the help-seeking behaviour of substance users accessing the DirectLine telephone counselling and referral service in Victoria. The studies aimed to enhance knowledge of service use and consumer profiles in the alcohol and drug telephone counselling and referral system. Study 1 assessed the role of DirectLine in the treatment pathway of substance users as part of their overall alcohol or other drug help-seeking behaviour. This included the use of telephone and face-to-face treatment. Study 2 examined the referral function of DirectLine, by determining the total number of referral uptake among callers that use licit and illicit substances. Other factors believed to affect treatment entry were also examined (such as sex, relationship status, employment status).

Both studies provided information that describes the individuals who use alcohol and drug telephone services as well as information regarding the drug referral and treatment system in general. These studies will inform the Victorian alcohol and drug service sector.

DirectLine is available 24/7 on Freecall number 1800 888 236.

DRUG PREVENTION TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

In 2004, the PDPC established a Drug Prevention Travelling Fellowship award program. The purpose of the award is to advance the Council's aim of preventing alcohol and drug related harm through the investigation of international models of best practice in drug prevention. The program also enhances Victoria's workforce capacity and provides leadership in drug prevention.

The 2006 Fellowship was awarded to Mr Craig Fry from Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre to undertake his project *Examining international process and technical innovations for enhanced youth drug surveillance in Victoria*. Mr Fry's study

program involved visiting international experts in youth drug surveillance at Bergen Clinics, Norway; the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drugs Addiction in Portugal; the US Institute for International Research on Youth at Risk; and the US National Development and Research Institute. He also recently attended the Harm Reduction Conference in Vancouver.

During his tour, Mr Fry examined the issues and challenges involved in establishing youth drug surveillance systems in diverse settings, and developed and disseminated information about opportunities that exist for defining a wider set of lead indicators of emerging drug use trends when establishing sentinel youth drug surveillance. The results of his study tour will inform Victoria's capacity to monitor drug use by at risk young people, an identified gap in current surveillance systems. This will in turn inform drug prevention policy, program and service interventions. The findings from his tour will also contribute to the PDPC's at risk Youth Drug Reporting System project.

The 2005 Travelling Fellowship was awarded to Dr Paul Dietze from Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, for a short study tour of the United Kingdom to inform his project *Estimating the Prevalence of Problematic Drug Use in Melbourne*. The primary objective of the study tour was to undertake work at the Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour on using ambulance data to examine the characteristics of problematic drug use in Melbourne, and the utility of this data for wider prevalence estimation.

His work was designed to provide the first systematic examination of ambulance attendances across different drug classes (heroin, ecstasy and related drugs, benzodiazepines) to determine the nature and extent of this key drug-related harm and to produce estimates of the prevalence of problematic drug use to better inform policy responses in Victoria.

Dr Dietze found that ambulance data can be used to generate estimates of the prevalence of heroin use in Melbourne using closed population capture-recapture techniques. However, there are significant problems with the estimates that were generated. As such, he has also made recommendations concerning enhancing data capture capacities with regard to problematic drug prevalence in Melbourne. He has also recommended that further investigation be undertaken regarding prescribing practices that result in the large number of benzodiazepine presentations; and that the circumstances of ecstasy and related drugs overdoses need to be better understood in terms of the patterns of use and contextual factors that place people at risk of overdose.

Dr Dietze presented his work at the 16th International Conference of the Reduction of Drug Related Harm in Belfast, Northern Ireland in March 2006.

THE SECRETARIAT

The PDPC Secretariat has five staff who provide valuable support to the Council. The Secretariat develops and implements Council initiatives and provides support to Council meetings. This work includes research, designing, managing and monitoring projects, supporting advisory groups, making recommendations and implementing communications strategies.

Members of the Secretariat are:

Estelle O'Callaghan	Manager
Brian Vandenberg	Senior Policy Officer
Diane Edwards	Senior Research Analyst
Karene Fairbairn	Senior Communications Officer
Melanie Nel	Office Manager

The Secretariat can be contacted on 03 9096 0378, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday.



OTHER AUSTRALIAN WEBSITES

The Drug Info Clearinghouse
www.druginfo.adf.org.au/

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA)
www.adca.org.au/

Australian Drug Information Network (ADIN)
www.adin.com.au/

Australian National Council on Drugs
www.ancd.org.au/

Centre for Adolescent Health
www.rch.org.au/cah/index.cfm?doc_id=833

ALCOHOL

READING

Preventing harmful substance use: the evidence base for policy and practice—Edited by Stockwell, T., Gruenewald, P., Toumbourou, J., and Loxley, W., 2005

The essential handbook of treatment and prevention of alcohol problems—Edited by Heather, N. and Stockwell, T., 2004

Alcohol, no ordinary commodity: research and public policy—By Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., Edwards, G., Giesbrecht, Graham, K., Grube, J., Gruenewald, P., Hill, L., Holder, H., Homel, R., Osterberg, E., Rehm, J., Room, R., Rossow, I., 2003

WEBSITES

Community Alcohol Action Network (CAAN), Australia
www.caan.adf.org.au

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Parliament of Victoria – provides a downloadable version of the recent report from the Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption.
www.parliament.vic.gov.au/dcpc

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), United States
www.nida.nih.gov

World Health Organization (WHO), Global Alcohol Database – provides standardised information for global epidemiological surveillance of alcohol use, alcohol related problems and alcohol policies.
www3.who.int/whosis/menu.cfm?path=whosis,alcohol

New Zealand Drug Policy – provides fact sheets, downloadable publications, legislation and related information about alcohol in New Zealand.
www.ndp.govt.nz/alcohol/alcohol.html

Centre for Youth Drug Studies
www.cyds.adf.org.au/

Turning Point
www.turningpoint.org.au/

VicHealth
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/

Victorian Government Drug Information Site
www.health.vic.gov.au/drugs/

Premier's Drug Prevention Council
www.health.vic.gov.au/pdpc/

DrugInfo Clearinghouse



druginfo.adf.org.au 1300 85 85 84

Funded by the PDPC and managed by the Australian Drug Foundation, the DrugInfo Clearinghouse continues to work at a frenetic pace to ensure workers are kept informed on the latest in drug prevention. Many of you would be familiar with our activities, but for those who haven't yet joined our 4,000 plus members, here's a quick update on our program happenings.

Our publishing team has been busy researching and writing our newsletters, research reports and fact sheets on *Social Marketing* (November 2005) and *Peer Education and Prevention* (March 2006). Both of these topics have proven popular with our audiences, and our quarterly seminars have been well attended with more than 100 people at each. Copies of all materials and reports from the seminars are available at www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Wendy and Linda in the library are pleased to announce the launch of an online journal service. Library members can now log in and access the best academic and health journals on drugs and drug prevention online. You can also save searches and have updates emailed to you automatically. Membership of the library is open to all Victorians working in education, health, policy and other fields related to drug prevention.

The Resource Centre Infodesk continues to receive around 1,000 information requests per month. Most requests are from people working in the drug or health-related fields, with significant numbers of teachers, government workers, students and law enforcement professionals also contacting us. While different drug types are of interest to different groups, alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy have been most popular, with small but disturbing increases in demand for information about 'ice' and 'GHB'.

Our Resource Centre staff are available 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, so if you'd like to check out our new resources, take away some freebies, chat to a librarian or information officer, or join up, feel free to visit us at 409 King Street, West Melbourne. If you're an online member of the Clearinghouse you will also receive fortnightly email alerts on drug trends and new publications, as well as regular free offers on new ADF resources. Give us a call on 1300 85 85 84 to change your membership type or update your details.

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