



AOD eNews September 2024

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1. Central and Eastern Sydney PHN

Author: Paul Hardy, Drug Health Manager
Update from CESPHN

31 August marks International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD), the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose, remember without stigma those who have died from overdose, and acknowledge the grief of the family and friends left behind.

The IOAD theme for 2024 is **"Together we can"**, highlighting the power of our community when we all stand together.

In 2021, there were 2,231 drug-induced deaths in Australia, with a fatal overdose occurring every four hours. From 2001 to 2021 there has been a 33% growth in the population of Australia, but across the same period of time there has been a 71% increase in the number of unintentional drug induced deaths.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long been drastically overrepresented in the mounting toll, and their unintentional overdose rate is now more than triple that of the non-Indigenous population at 20 per 100,000 compared with 5.9 per 100,000.

The emergence of synthetic opioids such as Nitazenes and their presence in a diverse range of drugs further increases the risk of unintentional overdose, making increased distribution and uptake of Naloxone more important than ever before.

For more information on the Take Home Naloxone Program please visit the NSW Health webpage
For more information on Nitazenes please see the ADF factsheet.

2. Kirketon Road Centre

*Author: Julie Dubuc, Counselling Unit Manager
Kirketon Road Center*

The Kirketon Road Center (KRC) has completed workplace assessor training for AOD clinical care standards being rolled out and currently undergoing pilot in risk standard.

Within our OAT program: 75 percent of clients on OAT are on Buvidal. 44% of our clients on OAT are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island.

KRC have recently met with Fiji health delegates who were consulting local services on best intervention practices to reduce HIV infection rates. This is due to the increase of HIV in Fiji being driven by the sharing of needles (Methamphetamine use), a practice referred locally as “blue tooth”.

Regarding counselling, recent cognitive flexibility training has been delivered, working with clients with cognitive impairment. We are seeing an increase in clients presenting with serious domestic violence issues. KRC are also on the SESLHD adult survivors committee with the aim of providing more training/support. We are implementing systems and practices to improve working with clients from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds. Our new Level 3 senior counsellor role working well.

KRC are providing fentanyl testing strips and Nitazene health awareness for health promotion.

Our partnership with the “Eyes of Hope” ophthalmologist are providing eye tests, referrals and to fit and provide glasses. KRC have facilitated a monthly healthy cooking session to show how to cook on minimal money.

Within our medical unit, we have two drug & alcohol registrars and one Addictions Specialist per week and one psychiatry Registrar with demand continuing for both services. There is also a high alert for Mpox due to recent outbreak.

Our nursing team continues to provide outreach at lots of sites including vaccinations EMA weekly clinic continues and Mpox vaccinations.

3. The Station Ltd. Drop-in Centre

*Author: Graciela Luna & Yumna Sikander
The Station Ltd*

We promote mental health and well-being, with the prevention of substance abuse, these are integral parts of the support that we bring to our community.

Our staff transforms this objective into action through the following core approach of harm minimization, early intervention, and referrals.

Once a week a team of medical practitioners attend the Centre. This team includes a GP, a registered nurse, Mental Health Clinician, and a psychiatrist.

Also, once a week we have the legal service clinic. The team is led by Homeless Persons' Legal Services.

Counselling and Alcohol & Other Drugs support is available Monday to Friday: from 8:00am to 3:30pm. Services are free of charge.

Other services available at The Station Ltd Drop-In-Centre are Meals, Showers, Laundry facilities, Housing Support, Dental Care referrals, tea & coffee, computers, Wi-Fi, Foxtel, and a relaxing atmosphere. Operating seven days a week from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday to Friday. Sat & Sun from 7:30 am to 2:00 pm.



During Homelessness Week, we raised awareness of the impact of homelessness in Australia through a Bingo game, which got our clients together to talk about problems and support options. This activity gives the clients a degree of entertainment, something different to break their boredom, lots of laughter and yummy nibbles. Food vouchers, gift cards and Opal cards were given to the winners.

We would also like to share a case study with all of you.

Thomas is an Aboriginal man born in the Inner West but raised in a rural area. Due to problematic relationships with his family, Thomas developed AOD concerns primarily with alcohol but also other illicit substances. After an incident in which 2 people were killed Thomas was sentenced to 27 years in prison. He was released in 2022 and was sleeping rough in Sydney.

Thomas came to The Station for immediate help with showering, laundry, and meals. As he got to know the staff at The Station, he began to look for accommodation, at this time Thomas was very cautious and could not bear to be around people, he would shut himself off from his surroundings due to feelings of claustrophobia. We had to build trust and be very open with him about our intentions and what we could do to help him. The first step in helping him was to get as much documentation as possible, such as ID, Medicare, Centrelink card and other paperwork to take to DCJ Housing.

Our relationship developed, making it easier to support Thomas around accommodation. Because of his long incarceration and his use of alcohol and marijuana post release, the most important paperwork he needed was a medical assessment. Thomas listened to the doctors and psychiatrist's advice about his AOD concerns and began the road to recovery.

Within 8 to 10 weeks, Thomas was housed. Thomas has now fully furnished his flat, bought a car and is working part-time. He keeps to himself but is slowly learning to open and make the most of his life. The Station has continued to support Thomas on an outreach basis to sustain his tenancy.

4. South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Author: Dr Sandra Sunjic, Manager Partnerships and Community Projects
New Clinical Nurse Consultants (CNC) boost services in South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Drug and Alcohol Service has been fortunate to recruit to some essential senior clinical nursing positions which will play a key role in the service and in assisting other

clinicians to provide co-ordinated and integrated care to people with problematic alcohol and/or other drug (AoD) use.

Two CNC positions have been established to work within hospital and community settings to assist in the provision of care for people with both mental health and AoD conditions. These are co-funded by both services and a list of duties was developed for both positions to address specific needs at each location, as well as general requirements of the role. One position is based at St George and the other is at Sutherland. These positions are in addition to the well-established position at Prince of Wales Hospital.

The Comorbidity CNCs play a vital role in developing strong working relationships between Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Services. They will facilitate implementation of some of the recommendations identified through a Mindgardens funded comorbidity project conducted in SESLHD in 2021 – 2023. The project was a partnership between SESLHD Drug & Alcohol and Mental Health Services, NDARC at UNSW and a range of other key stakeholders. It involved staff at all levels of the organisation i.e. consumer workers, clinicians, researchers, health information managers and service and senior managers, who all committed to the project and participated in focus groups, a Design Lab, working groups etc.

Recommendations developed by the participants of the project included; addressing identified gaps, as well as opportunities for improvement. There were a total of 120 ideas generated, which were aligned to 35 ideas and solutions. Staff from SESLHD then voted on the top 10 for implementation. Two of the recommendations in the top 10 which relate to the Comorbidity CNC positions include; streamlined referral processes and pathways, and joint case review meetings.

In addition to the Comorbidity CNC positions, SESLHD is advertising for the Community Liaison CNC position for the GP Liaison Alcohol and other Drugs (GLAD) project. The position is a district wide role. The CNC will address the needs of GPs, and other community providers e.g. Pharmacists, in providing care to people in the community with AoD issues. There will be a consistent approach in the provision of these services across the local health district.

5. ACON

Author: ACON

Be Unapologetic – Alcohol & Cancer Risk

Increasing awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer risks for LGBTQ+ populations in NSW is the focus of a new campaign developed by ACON as part of a hugely successful and ongoing partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW.

Research shows that LGBTQ+ people tend to drink more alcohol than the rest of the population, which puts the community at greater risk of alcohol-related cancers and other health issues.

Be Unapologetic informs LGBTQ+ communities about the links between alcohol and cancer whilst letting the community know that by drinking within the recommended drinking guidelines – no more than 4 standard drinks a day and no more than 10 standard drinks in a week – you can reduce your cancer risk.

Be Unapologetic is a health promotion campaign featuring four LGBTQ+ community members who, in their own voice and style, discuss making choices to lower alcohol consumption. These messages are about being comfortable in your own skin, making healthy choices, and celebrating authenticity.

This inclusive campaign delivers a message about the link between alcohol and cancer risk, increases awareness of the Australian Alcohol Guidelines and uplifts and affirms an unapologetic approach to reducing the consumption of alcohol or not drinking at all. Four unapologetic community identities are the leading voices in the campaign. They are:

- Benjamin Law (he/him): an Australian author, screenwriter, journalist and community stalwart.
- Kirsty Webeck (she/her): a comedian, actor, MC, podcaster, and self-described 'really good friend'.
- Kelly (Lovemonster) Dezart-Smith (they/them): a queer dance party curator, creative producer, and writer.
- Rudy Jean Rigg (they/them): a passionate queer rainbow champion and one-half of the Rainbow History Class podcast.

ACON is proud to work with four amazing and diverse people from our communities to use their voices to provide non-judgemental, supportive messages about choice. As with every campaign we produce, we centre our communities' lives and experience while being firmly evidence-based - in the interests of better health outcomes.

For more information about Be Unapologetic and reducing your cancer risk, visit canwe.org.au.

Follow the campaign on socials:

[INSTAGRAM](#)

[FACEBOOK](#)



Meet Rudy.
Rudy is unapologetic
about their choices
- especially their
choice to cap their
drinks to 4 standards
on a night out.

Drinking within the alcohol guidelines can lower your risk of cancer. [Learn more at canwe.org.au](https://canwe.org.au)

6. Community Restorative Centre

Author: David Chivers (Manager – AOD Transition Programs, Community Restorative Centre)
CRC's National Reconciliation Week event

The event was well attended by CRC staff at our Head Office in Canterbury, a clear reflection of our collective commitment to reconciliation. The day began with a heartfelt Acknowledgement of Country, setting the tone for the importance of the occasion. First Nations Education then led us through a powerful smoking ceremony, a deeply moving ritual that left many of us reflecting on the significance of our shared history and the steps we need to take towards a more unified future.

The atmosphere became lively as we were treated to incredible traditional music and dance, performed with passion and pride. When invited to join in the dancing, our staff didn't hesitate. There was laughter and smiles all around as we embraced the opportunity to connect with the culture in such a joyous and inclusive way.

To conclude the event, Michelle Bryant, our Program Director, delivered an inspiring speech that resonated with everyone present:

"National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

This year's theme for National Reconciliation Week is 'Now More Than Ever'. We've certainly progressed but there is still a very long way to go. Now more than ever, we need action.

We need to see action in tackling the systemic issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in this country every day, in fairness and equity, and tackling racism. Now more than ever, we need respect.

Today I would like to acknowledge all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we work with throughout NSW and the shameful over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. Now more than ever, we need change.

We must stand up for the fight for injustice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Since colonisation and as demonstrated all too clearly in last year's referendum, as a nation we have been divided but we must find a way to come together. Now more than ever, we need connection."



7. WEAVE

Author: Jamie Alford, Program Manager Weave Youth and Community Services, Speak Out Program

Weave Speak Out Youth Week Art Exhibition

Established in 1997, Weave's Speak Out Dual Diagnosis Program works with adolescents and young adults aged 12-28 years experiencing co-existing mental health, alcohol and other drug challenges to provide practical and therapeutic support. Speak Out uses a holistic model of care that responds to the issues that young people identify as their priorities and includes opportunities to participate in youth-led, strengths-based groups, projects and events which provide opportunities for recovery, community engagement, self actualisation and alternatives to substance use.

In celebration of Youth Week 2024, the Weave Speak Out Youth Week Art Exhibition featured 35 local young artists to showcase their talents. Many of these young people were exhibiting for the first time, and many of them selling their original work for the first time.

In the lead up to opening night Weave facilitated free art sessions run by Weave Waterloo Art Therapist to provide art supplies, time, assistance, and a space in which to develop their work. The idea for an Art

Exhibition came from the Youth Advocates after the overwhelming success of the mini art wall at the 2023 Mad Pride event. After every artist sold their work at Mad Pride, some even commissioned for future pieces by attendees, the group saw that there was an opportunity for more.

The Weave Youth Advocates who planned the event, attended a session on how to curate and design an art exhibition, giving them both creative and event planning skills for future work.

The planning committee dreamed up an interactive installation for the event named 'The Kindness Wall' in which members of the public attending the event could contribute by answering questions and writing down acts of kindness to add to the growing art feature.

The Art Exhibition opening night was attended by 100 community members. The exhibition was open to the public for several days following the exhibition. 35 Young Artists creative participants (artists, creative and cultural workers) engaged with the project, more than half of these young artists were Aboriginal.

Weave's Youth Week Art Exhibition saw great participation across our diverse communities through the planning and implementation of this event. Weave's Youth advocates who were instrumental in the planning and development of the event were all female-identifying young people, 50% were Aboriginal, and 50% identify as LGBTQI.

The event was free to attend, suitable for all ages, drug/alcohol free.



8. Safe Havens

Author: Antje Ihrig, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Program Officer, CESP HN

A Safe Haven is a calm and non-clinical alternative to hospital emergency departments for people experiencing emotional distress or suicidal thoughts.

It is a safe space where people can talk openly about what they are feeling and what they are going through. Guests can talk to peer support workers or be connected to a mental health professional.

Safe Havens provide immediate, personalised, and compassionate care and connect people to support services to address the underlying factors in their distress.

It is free and no Medicare is required. No referrals or appointments are needed.

Darlinghurst Safe Haven – St Vincent’s Health Network

Address: St Vincent’s O’Brien Centre (Community Mental Health), 390 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010

Open: Saturday and Sunday 12.00 pm to 4.00 pm

Contact: SafeHavenCafe@svha.org.au

Eligibility: Anyone over the age of 16 years

Kogarah Safe Haven – South Eastern Sydney LHD

Address: Kirk Place, Unit 1-2, Ground Floor, 15 Kensington Street, Kogarah NSW 2217

Open: Thursday to Tuesday 5.00 pm to 9.00 pm

Contact: SESLHD-safehaven@health.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9113 2981

Eligibility: Anyone over the age of 16 years

Newtown – Sydney LHD

Address: 168 Missenden Road, Newtown NSW 2047

Open: Monday 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, Wednesday to Friday 2.00 pm to 8.00 pm

Contact: SLHD-SafeHaven@health.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9562 5830

Eligibility: Anyone over the age of 18 years.

Safe Space

Summer Hill Safe Space is a non-clinical, lived experience and peer-led service that provides support to anyone in suicidal distress, mental distress or chronic loneliness. Summer Hill Safe Space is guided by the guest in how they wish to be supported, as the guest is considered the expert in their life. Volunteers with lived experience will hold space for guests and if appropriate, support people with Safety Planning and warm referrals to other services. Staff employed at the Safe Space have undertaken Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training.

Address: The Little BIG House, 16 Flourmill Way, Summer Hill NSW 2130

Open: Friday and Saturday 5.30 pm to 9.00 pm

Contact: contact@safespacesummerhill.net.au

Eligibility: Anyone is welcome to attend.

9. The Haymarket Foundation

*Author: <Isabella Cortes, AODSS Case Manager/Counsellor, The Haymarket Foundation
SMART Recovery Feedback*

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Support Service (AODSS) aims to connect clients with appropriate Alcohol and Other Drugs treatment and recovery pathways, it provides AOD Counselling, Case Management, and SMART Recovery groups. The service is run by The Haymarket Foundation and funded by Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network CESPNN.

SMART Recovery is a self-empowering program that helps people to achieve independence from addictive behaviours.

SMART Recovery meetings use evidence-based tools to enable people seeking to change and self-manage all types of addictive behaviour, most related to alcohol, drugs, gambling, cigarettes, food, technology etc. The meetings are free and run weekly, the meetings run for 90 minutes. AODSS

commenced running the SMART Recovery Group F2F in 2022 from our office in Woolloomooloo, unfortunately at this time attendance was low.

The AODSS Service soon decided to open an online SMART Recovery Group. This was a women's only group on Tuesday at 12:00pm. AODSS provided women a safe space for this meeting. Initially the group started with 4 to 6 women, after 6 months the group increased to more than 10 participants per session, with both new and recurrent participants. AODSS requested that participants share their experience.

"I've been attending Tuesday midday ladies only SMART RECOVERY meeting with Isabella since 5th September last year. I had found out about SMART through phone to Wellness line who suggested I join.. I find the tools amazing and being given direction really helps. Just focussing on last 7 days and coming 7 days makes it seem manageable.

Sometimes Isabella would present a few tools or worksheets to work from and we got to choose which one to work on based on a group vote. So the tools were targeted on the day.

I keep coming back because it helps. Hearing others, helping others, refocusing on successes and goals and strategies and specific tasks really helps. Putting tools in the toolkit. I had a few months break when I was doing really well and busy on Tuesdays but knew straight where to come back to now I need some support.

I always feel safe in the meeting. It is a safe place. The group is kept on track and difficult topics are given space and time.

So glad this exists and it's free and it's females. Most appreciative of this space and time."

10. Sector news, additional resources, other upcoming events, training and webinars

- **NSW Drug Summit** dates announced
The NSW Government has confirmed the NSW Drug Summit will be held over two days in regional NSW in October (locations to be confirmed), and in Sydney on 4 and 5 December.
- **NSW Health Safety Notice:** Cases of dependence and overdose linked to nitazenes (strong opioids) in refillable vape liquids
[Click here to read the full notice](#)
- **Maternal Alcohol Reduction Interventions (MARI):** coproducing support for women, to improve health and reduce alcohol harm
Presented by Dr Abi Rose, Reader in Alcohol behaviour
[Register here](#)
- **NCCRED Symposium 2024**
NCCRED is hosting its annual symposium Innovations: Improving health outcomes for people who use methamphetamine and emerging drugs. ^[08]
[Register here](#)
- [Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2024 – Penington Institute](#)
- [Synthetic opioids preparedness plan for NSW 2024](#)
- [NSW Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Strategy 2024-2032](#)

If you would like CESPHN to meet with you to discuss these or any of our other AOD referral options with you, please contact the AOD team at **aodnewsletters@cesphn.com.au**

For more information about our programs visit

www.cesphn.org.au/allied-health/help-my-patients-with/drug-and-alcohol-support