

# NewsPoint

June 2007



**Turning Point**

Alcohol & Drug Centre

HERE TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE

A newsletter produced by Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre to highlight issues relating to alcohol and drug treatment and the activities and concerns of the organisation.

Turning Point strives to promote and maximise the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities living with and affected by alcohol and other drug-related harms.



## In this issue

P2 [NEWS IN BRIEF](#)

P3 [METHAMPHETAMINE STUDIES](#)

P3 [CULTURAL AWARENESS PROGRAM](#)

P4 [INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION](#)

P4 [SUPPORT TURNING POINT](#)

ISSN 1834-5697 (Print)  
ISSN 1834-5697 (Online)

## Treating ice users New guidelines for workers



Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Human Services have produced comprehensive treatment guidelines to assist counsellors, doctors and other health professionals in helping methamphetamine users.

"The difference between this new resource and others that have been produced recently, is that these guidelines cover all major treatment options for this group, including managing toxicity and overdose, withdrawal, counselling and dealing with mental health problems," says Dr Nicole Lee, lead author of the guidelines. "They are specifically designed for health and welfare professionals with treatment interventions outlined in detail."

Methamphetamine is the second most commonly used illicit drug in Australia after cannabis, with recent estimates suggesting that 73,000 Australians are dependent users.

An increase in the availability and use of more potent forms of methamphetamine such as 'crystal meth' or 'ice' is causing problems for clinicians and health care workers, who are now required to deal with a range of complex presentations that include dependence, polydrug use, mental health symptoms and acute behavioural disturbances such as psychosis and aggression.

"It is important that clinicians feel confident in their dealings with people who use methamphetamines," says Dr Lee. "And that clients are aware that there is effective treatment out there with counsellors and doctors who know how to help."

The guidelines also outline ways in which treatment providers can make their services more amphetamine 'user friendly' and attract more people who are experiencing drug-related problems into treatment. Up until now, users have been reluctant to enter treatment largely because they are not certain that current services have anything specific to offer them.

*Methamphetamine Dependence and Treatment*, the fourteenth publication in the Clinical Treatment Guidelines series is available to order in hard copy or as a free download from the Turning Point website. Go to: [www.turningpoint.org.au](http://www.turningpoint.org.au) for more information.



## From the Director...



Turning Point continues to undergo change, reinventing itself as a more relevant and independent organisation, to better fulfill its role as the leader in the alcohol and drug sector in Victoria, and its aspirations to be world-leading. Change is not always easy, especially in a context of such pressing, multiple and complex needs, and of relatively marginal funding. But we have a strong vision of the extraordinary institution Turning Point can be, and a constant awareness of the immense need for relevant services that's out there. We have a strong and committed team driving us to meet the need with a strong, active and engaged Board, a skilled and passionate staff and a range of key allies and partners.

As the environment continues to change, there are huge challenges ahead for an organisation such as Turning Point. One of our key goals is to create thriving service delivery, research and development cultures, generating knowledge and practice that promotes health and wellbeing for individuals and communities. Our aspiration is to apply, use and translate research and development outcomes to promote change, build effective and rational policy, and demonstrate, provide and contribute to world's best practice in the treatment of alcohol and other drug problems.

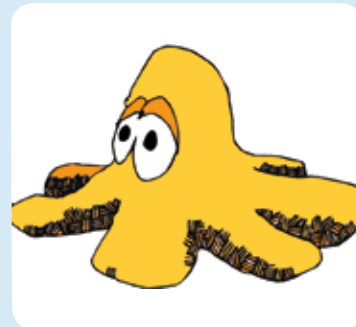
Changes in the research environment is one example of a challenge that Turning Point is now facing, and one that necessitates the need to change the way we have seen ourselves as a research enterprise by building new partnerships with universities. The changing service environment, especially with an increased recognition of the mental health issues our patients face, and the changing alcohol and other drug scene, means that we have to be far more flexible and responsive to the needs of all Victorians.

So there is much change yet to encounter and an absolute commitment at all levels in Turning Point to strive to meet our goals.

## News in Brief

**Turning Point will be the major beneficiary of this year's annual Rotary Club hypothetical** held on Wednesday 13th June at BMW Edge, Federation Square. Now in its third year, the topic for the fundraiser is Paradise Lost – what happens to members of an isolated religious community when their life of tranquility and simplicity is turned upside down? Jack Hammond QC is the moderator and the panel includes Dr Peter Hollingworth, Alexandra Richards QC, Arnold Zable, Paul Sheahan, Rod Quantock and the Hon Joan Kirner. Tickets are \$55 and includes drinks and nibbles. To download a booking order form go to: [www.rotaryd9800.org/centralmelbournesunrise](http://www.rotaryd9800.org/centralmelbournesunrise)

The money raised will fund Ethyl, a short animated movie about an alcohol molecule and the harms associated with excessive drinking. Ethyl will join Opie, Turning Point's hugely successful animation about an opiate molecule, with others in the series set to follow.



'Ethyl', from the new alcohol animation being developed by Turning Point

**A new speakers' bureau** is up and running at Turning Point, aimed at providing informative talks and presentations for community groups, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and the corporate sector. Speakers are experienced, professional staff members who represent the breadth of work undertaken by Turning Point to make a difference to those affected by alcohol and drug related harms. Speaker profiles can be viewed at: [http://www.turningpoint.org.au/library/lib\\_spkr\\_profiles.htm](http://www.turningpoint.org.au/library/lib_spkr_profiles.htm). If you are interested in booking a speaker, call the Coordinator on 03 8413 8413 or email your enquiry to [info@turningpoint.org.au](mailto:info@turningpoint.org.au)

**An online alcohol self-assessment tool** has been developed by Turning Point and is now available through our website. The number of Australians who drink alcohol in potentially harmful ways who present to drug treatment services is far outweighed by the number of people estimated to require such services. There are relatively few opportunities or services for early intervention, particularly for those people who do not meet criteria for dependence but who may still be drinking at moderate to high risk levels and would benefit from some brief and early intervention. Anyone with internet access can log-on anonymously and complete a questionnaire which returns an assessment of the risks they face from their current level of consumption.

**The eighth publication in the Alcohol Statistics Handbook series** received plenty of attention when it was launched by Health Minister Bronwyn Pike at this year's Thinking Drinking conference. *Alcohol use and related harm among young people across Victorian Local Government Areas 2006* highlights the numbers of young people in the community who are putting themselves at risk by binge-drinking. A useful resource for policy makers, planners and other interested people, the alcohol statistics handbook is one of a series which provides accessible, easy to interpret information on alcohol use and related harm at statewide, regional and local area levels. To download a copy of the handbook, go to: [http://www.turningpoint.org.au/library/lib\\_epi.htm](http://www.turningpoint.org.au/library/lib_epi.htm)

**A revised edition of the successful training package from Go to Whoa** will soon be disseminated across all states. First made available in 1999 from funding by the National Drug Strategy, *from Go to Whoa* has been designed specifically for health professionals who are undergoing continuing education in the treatment of people with psychostimulant-related problems. The training program is flexible and can be delivered as a one day session or a two four hour sessions. For more information about *from Go to Whoa*, contact Kieran Connolly on 03 8413 8704.

**Turning Point staff, Dr Chris Walsh and Tina Goodman are providing their support for FADNET** – the national conference for the Family Alcohol and Drug Network. The conference will be held at the Darebin Arts Centre in Preston on 27th-28th of June. Registrations are still open. For more information, visit: [www.odyssey.org.au/fadnet](http://www.odyssey.org.au/fadnet)

**Turning Point has successfully maintained its Quality Improvement Council (QIC) accreditation** following a routine review of the organisation's policies and standards in April this year. Turning Point was first accredited by QIC in 2004 and works continually to build upon and improve its compliance with Health and Community Services standards.

# Methamphetamine treatment studies

## Methamphetamine and depression

A new study funded by Beyondblue will see treatment options for methamphetamine users with concurrent symptoms of depression trialled at Turning Point. Forty two methamphetamine users will be required for the study. They will be randomly assigned one of three options: treatment that addresses only methamphetamine use, treatment that addresses both methamphetamine use and depression, and a control group.

Those in the treatment groups will undergo 6 weeks of specialised counselling with a clinical psychologist and will be followed up for 6 months after their treatment.

Interested methamphetamine users can participate in the study by calling Angela Harney on 03 8413 8446. You will be asked a few questions and if suitable for the study, be booked in with one of the counsellors.

## Modafinil

A pilot study of a new medication for methamphetamine users is currently taking place at Turning Point. The randomised trial aims to examine whether the wakefulness drug modafinil can assist in withdrawal from methamphetamine dependence.

Participants are randomly assigned to modafinil or placebo and their physical and psychological symptoms as well as neurocognitive measures will be observed. The study is being conducted in collaboration with Moreland Hall and DAS West and is funded by the Illicit Drugs Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Dependent methamphetamine users who are not currently on medication can be referred into the study by contacting Amy Pennay on 03 8413 8460. You will be asked a few questions and if suitable for the study, be booked in for assessment.

## Amphetamine clinics

Turning Point has recently been awarded a large grant to establish and trial two specialist methamphetamine clinics in Melbourne and is currently in discussion with Access Health about a possible collaboration. The clinics will operate in two of the major methamphetamine hotspots in Melbourne - Fitzroy and St Kilda.

Clients who come into the clinics for treatment will be offered a range of comprehensive services tailored to their needs, including access to specialist case management, psychological treatment and GP and psychiatry services.

The clinics have been funded through the Proceeds of Crime from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. The planned opening of the clinics is late 2007. For further information about the clinics, contact Dr Nicole Lee on 03 8413 8416.



Nicole Lee, Turning Point's Clinical Research Program Leader will be working on the establishment of the methamphetamine clinics

## PROGRAM PROFILE

# Indigenous cultural awareness

Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre recognises the challenge facing mainstream alcohol and other drug (AOD) service providers in responding to substance use related issues within Aboriginal communities. In taking this challenge seriously, an Indigenous Health Action Group, made up of staff from different program areas of Turning Point has been meeting regularly to enhance the organisation's capacity to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Key objectives of the group include developing culturally respectful and meaningful partnerships, policies and practices with Aboriginal communities, and enhancing and developing more culturally competent service delivery, research and education developments for Aboriginal people and their communities.

Supporting and building relationships with indigenous community groups is a priority for Turning Point and the Action Group continues to develop positive relationships with a range of organisations including Ngwala Willumbong, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) and the Maya Healing Centre.

In July, a three week Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program (ICAP) funded by the Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation will encourage indigenous and non-indigenous organisations to come together and talk about issues relating to indigenous health and healing and explore ways in which these organisations can support one another and their communities. Examples of workshops titles included in the 3 week program are: "The making of a great relationship between an indigenous and mainstream organisation" and "What its like to be Aboriginal health/AOD worker." Representatives from at least eight different organisations along with Turning Point staff will participate in a series of interactive workshops, talks and presentations which focus on improving knowledge and skills around culturally appropriate and responsive services for Aboriginal people. Some workshops will be open to the public however numbers are limited.

For more information go to: [http://www.turningpoint.org.au/service\\_information/si\\_icap.htm](http://www.turningpoint.org.au/service_information/si_icap.htm)

