



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.



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Alcohol-related violence

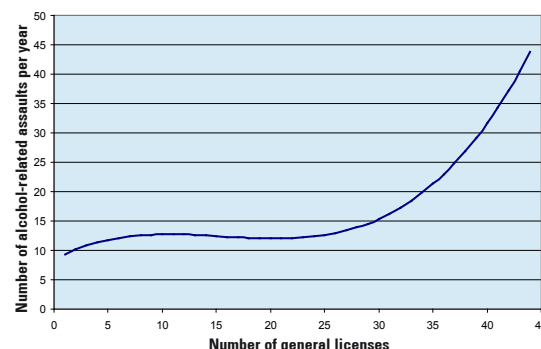
Understanding the impact of increases in licensed venues

It is no surprise to most Australians that alcohol-related violence in our community is a growing problem. With alcohol a hot topic in the media at the moment and Melbourne newspapers reporting an increase in levels of binge-drinking and antisocial behaviour in the CBD and suburbs as well as experts questioning the relaxed restrictions on the sale of beer, wine and spirits, Turning Point Research Fellow, Michael Livingston has been involved in studying the link between assault rates and the number of licensed venues in local areas.

"Victoria has seen the number of licences double in the past decade and there has been little or no analysis of the impacts of this increase," says Michael. "We've undertaken some analysis at a postcode level assessing whether suburbs with more bottleshops and licensed venues experience greater rates of alcohol-related violence.

"The results from our initial investigation suggest that there is a strong association between rates of violence and the number of licences in any given postcode that sell alcohol to be consumed on the premises – venues such as bars, clubs, hotels and restaurants. There is also some evidence that problems increase substantially once licence density reaches a kind of critical point."

The graph below shows the relationship between alcohol-related assault and the number of hotel licences in a typical suburb. Looking at



Relationship between general licences and alcohol-related assaults in a typical suburb



the stats, it's clear that alcohol-related assaults increase much more quickly once the number of pubs increases beyond thirty.

Michael's research is part of a larger study which has been examining the links between licensed premises and a range of harms – including domestic violence, alcohol-related hospitalisations and assault. So far, the work has highlighted the fact that suburbs with more licences tend to experience more problems. The next stage of the study will assess what happens as outlets increase over time. It is thought that this second stage will be completed by the end of the year.

Michael works for Turning Point's AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research where there are a number projects currently on the go, including a study examining youth drinking patterns and an assessment of the harm alcohol causes for people other than the drinker.

Indigenous cultural awareness



Reg Blow (CEO Maya Healing Centre) with Turning Point staff on the Healing Trail walk at Darebin Parklands

The Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program (ICAP), held over 3 weeks in July, successfully brought together a range of indigenous and non-indigenous people to share knowledge, experience, and stories regarding indigenous culture, health, disadvantage and healing. A series of workshops included cultural stories by Wurundjeri Elders Joy Murphy and Ian Hunter, a clinical workshop by Dennis McDermott and Di Gabb exploring transgenerational trauma of indigenous peoples, and an afternoon where Aboriginal health workers shared their experiences and challenges in working within their community and in a mainstream setting. A day was also spent at Maya Living Free Healing Centre with Reg Blow and Ross Morgan, where staff participated in healing rituals such as a smoking ceremony, and a spiritual healing walk.

Throughout the process, Turning Point staff had the opportunity to develop relationships and friendships with indigenous communities; develop an appreciation and understanding of indigenous culture, disadvantage and healing, and explore ways in which indigenous and non-indigenous organisations can support one another and build healthy partnerships. Most importantly, there was an opportunity to reflect on our culture, as individuals, as an organisation, and as a system and recognise areas in need of improvement. Our challenge now, is to use this new knowledge and experience and maintain an openness to learn and grow.

News in brief

On the last day of winter, 31st of August, Overdose Awareness Day remembered those who died from drug and alcohol use. Organised by the Salvation Army, silver badges signifying the profound loss of a loved one were available to wear on the day. Turning Point set up a display in the clinic, with an overdose remembrance book where staff and clients were invited to enter their personal stories and share their experiences. Information on overdose prevention as well as peer support and informal grief counselling was available. The day allowed people to publicly mourn the friends and family they have lost, some for the first time, without feeling guilt or shame. It also sent a strong message to current and former drug users that they are valued and respected.

A wide ranging review of Turning Point activities has been initiated by the Turning Point Board of Management. It will be funded by and will include the Department of Human Services in addition to other external stakeholders. The review will examine Turning Point's operating environment(s); assess opportunities to realise our charter in light of changes to state and national AOD policy; recommend possible changes to strategic direction and priorities and review organisational and governance arrangements in light of this context. The Board are committed to the vision of Turning Point and its valued place in the AOD sector and will be working to ensure an outcome that not only maintains, but also increases the impact of our current activities. The review is expected to be completed by December 2007.

The 2007 International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm held in Poland in May, was attended by four Turning Point research and clinical staff. The theme for the conference "Harm Reduction Coming of Age" was a title which, in the words of the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) Executive Director Gerry Stimson, "reminds us of what has been achieved so far, what is still left to achieve, and how to take harm reduction forward". Around 1200 participants from 89 countries attended sessions over five days on topics such as legalisation and regulatory frameworks, prison and sex work harm reduction, drug consumption rooms, universal access, needle exchange, empowering communities and medication-assisted treatment. The conference provides a unique opportunity each year for participants to present their research, exchange knowledge, network and form international collaborations.

A pharmacotherapy forum about methadone toxicity, suitable for pharmacists, methadone prescribers and people working in the AOD field, will be held on October 24th from 5.30-8.00pm at the Metropole Hotel, 44 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. The speaker, Dr Michael McDonough will discuss methadone toxicity. RSVPs are essential. Please register your interest by emailing Mal Doreian at mal.doreian@turningpoint.org.au or phone 03 8413 8721.

The Rotary Club hypothetical held in June proved to be a very successful evening for Turning Point and gave staff the chance to network with members of the community and generate discussion and interest in our projects. Ethyl, an animated movie about an alcohol molecule is currently under development thanks to funds raised from the event. A presentation of the cheque was conducted in August at a Rotary meeting in the city. Ray Stephens, the project leader of Ethyl, gave a presentation to the meeting about Turning Point, it's structure and goals, current projects and future directions, as well as 'hot topics' in the AOD field. The presentation also included feedback to Rotary on the progress of the animation and generated many questions from the considerable gathering of Rotary members on the applications of Ethyl and plans for its dissemination, as well as some content suggestions for the animation.

In conjunction with Mental Health Week (7-13th October), Dr Nicole Lee has been invited to speak at the University of Melbourne's Alice Barber Memorial Lecture on the topic of crystal meth. "Skating on thin ice" will answer questions about the risks of using crystal meth, its effects on mental health and the best options for prevention and treatment. The lecture will be held on Thursday 11th October in Theatre 1, 221 Bouverie Street, Carlton, from 6-7pm and is free. Please register your attendance with an email to Sarah Drew: sarah@unimelb.edu.au or phone 03 8344 6377.

Additional funding for Gamblers' Helpline

On 25th of June, Minister for Gaming, Daniel Andrews (now Health Minister) announced additional funds for Gamblers' Helpline as part of the Government's \$132 million 5-year strategy to significantly expand problem gambling treatment in Victoria.

"Turning Point will receive \$2.7 million in funding for the next four years, which is an increase of 46 per cent from the previous four years, to offer new and improved services to problem gamblers as well as their family and friends," Mr Andrews said.

Since 2000, Turning Point has been contracted to operate the Victorian Gamblers' Helpline, which responds to over 10,000 calls per year. Around two thirds of the calls are received from a gambler and one third from a concerned family member or relative, with over half of all callers identifying themselves as "new" treatment seekers. With the expansion of existing services, counsellors will soon be able to schedule "appointments" and provide structured ongoing support for clients.

"The Gamblers' Helpline service will also offer extended telephone counselling services including therapeutic counselling to assist new clients who may not otherwise access Gamblers' Helpline services due to hours of operation, waiting lists,

disability, geographic isolation or privacy concerns," said Mr Andrews.

In addition to providing brief intervention and crisis counselling and information and referrals over the phone, Turning Point will develop a new 24/7 live online counselling service for gambling. Planned for launch in July 2008, it will be similar to *CounsellingOnline*, an alcohol and drug online counselling service that Turning Point recently piloted. Self-assessment tools and self-help materials will also be made available, with clients able to access educational messages about gambling without needing to speak to a counsellor.

The funding for these enhanced services will enable the Helpline to improve the range and flexibility of treatment options for gamblers and other people affected by gambling in the community. As a leading provider of specialist telephone and online counselling services in Victoria, Turning Point is committed to providing accessible and anonymous support for anyone in the community concerned about addictive behaviours.



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP speaking at the Gamblers' Helpline re-launch

Gamblers' Helpline service statistics

- 83% of callers used electronic gaming machines
- 17% of callers were between 15 and 29 years old
- 42% of callers were female
- 27% of callers became aware of the service through information provided at a gambling venue

PROGRAM PROFILE

Acquired brain impairment consultancy

Turning Point's Acquired Brain Impairment (ABI) Clinician Consultant, Jo Famularo-Doyle brings six years of clinical experience to the job in the treatment of people with cognitive impairment. Consulting with, educating and supporting agencies and clients who are managing acquired brain impairment are all a part of Jo's role.

Throughout her career, Jo has been made aware of the often-unstated prejudice that people suffering from an ABI through alcohol or substance use are less worthy of assistance than others. With a need to continually promote the impact of brain injury within the alcohol and drug field, Jo's role as ABI Clinician has a new focus of highlighting the relationship between problem alcohol use and alcohol-related brain injury – a common form of ABI. There has also been a great demand for both organisational training and mentoring of AOD Clinicians and Jo's work has involved supporting ABI/AOD clinicians at other agencies across the state, consulting on ABI policy at a government level and establishing partnerships with a broad range of services.

There is debate within the AOD sector around how best to deal with people with "complex" needs. These clients are often physically fit, however their cognitive impairment leads to chaotic lifestyles, which their family, community supports and agencies find increasingly difficult to cope with.

In comparison to other areas of physical and cognitive disability, people with ABI have less access to services and are at risk of remaining a "hidden population". Jo's work in promoting ABI and training AOD workers to better respond to their clients needs will no doubt draw more attention to this issue.



Jo Famularo-Doyle, Turning Point's Acquired Brain Impairment (ABI) Clinician Consultant

