

NewsPoint

MARCH 2009

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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Turning Point
Alcohol & Drug Centre

Find some answers, get some help.

Just Ask Us is a 24/7 online network with information, tools, and advice for students with drug, alcohol, health and well-being issues.

JUSTASKUS.ORG.AU



Turning Point has developed a website to support university students seeking information and help around mental health, alcohol and other drug issues. The website www.JustAskUs.org.au, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing, was launched in October 2008 with marketing materials and wallet cards sent to universities nationwide for dissemination to students.

The website provides links, resources and information to tertiary students who have concerns, issues or questions about mental health or alcohol and other drugs, and provides links to help services nationally.

In addition to the information provided on the website, JustAskUs incorporates three self-assessment tools for students who want to identify their own level of risk in relation to drinking and smoking cannabis or conduct a mental health self-test. The assessment tools on the site, which have been adapted for an online environment, are the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), a modified version of the ASSIST screen for cannabis use (both developed by the World Health Organisation) and the Kessler 10 depression and anxiety assessment. The results page for each of these assessments provides recommendations about the steps that

can be taken if the student is concerned about their individual result (e.g. seeking help from a health professional or cutting down on alcohol intake).

During the course of 2009, Turning Point also hopes to extend the marketing and exposure of the JustAskUs site to students at TAFE and vocational education institutions. This would bring the total number of students exposed to the site to approximately 2 million students nationally.

**JUST
ASK US.**

NEWS IN BRIEF

The AusAid funded "IDI OST" project - Capacity Building Regional Initiative to Increase the Quality and Penetration of Substitution Therapy for Opioid Dependence Treatment in Asia, is now concluded after two and a half years of implementation.

Through this project, access to technical resources has been increased by the creation of a web-based Asian peer exchange forum. "MMT Niramit" provides key policy and program guidance documents in three languages to methadone maintenance workers in Asia. The website provides ongoing access to best practice and research to assist national and regional planning and management.

See <http://mmt.niramit.asia> for further details.

The Windana Day Program is designed for adults seeking to address their AOD problems in a non-residential, therapeutic environment. Turning Point is working with Windana staff to establish indicators for baseline and follow-up measurement, to identify whether the program is effective.

The collaborative approach to the evaluation is unique in that there is opportunity for knowledge sharing about project design and methods, as well as other elements of the program. Turning Point staff will independently analyse the project data, while seeking input from Windana staff on the significance of findings and practical directions for program improvement.

The evaluation is due to be completed in November 2009.

Professor Robin Room, head of the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, was awarded a Senior Scientist Award at the APSAD Conference in Sydney in November 2008. Well done Robin!

Drug and Alcohol Review released a special issue in January on the use of new technologies such as mobile phones, internet and computers in the treatment of drug problems. Turning Point is one of a few organisations to offer unique services designed to reach the broadest audience possible, with internet-based CounsellingOnline, providing live online chat style counselling sessions to people all over Australia. With 33,000 people visiting the website and 2,000 live counselling sessions delivered in just over a year, CounsellingOnline is an attractive option for people who need ready information, live in isolated areas or do not wish to attend face-to-face counselling.

"Improved service accessibility via web-based AOD counselling is reflected in high levels of after-hours service utilisation and access by typically hard to reach populations," says Research Fellow Amy Swan, one of the authors of a paper featured in DAR Vol 28, Issue 1. "The unique flexibility of web-based services offers the potential to complement and enhance the range of supports available to people affected by AOD issues in the community."

Update on Turning Point

In 2008, the Board of Directors at Turning Point accepted a recommendation of an external review by Robert Griew and Associates to explore the options for amalgamation with a metropolitan health service. This recommendation was based on the view that the legal and governance provisions of a stand-alone non-government body could in future, limit development of key organisational functions.

Turning Point received several expressions of interest to a formal request for proposals. After careful consideration, Eastern Health has been chosen as the preferred amalgamation partner. This was based on a number of important considerations, including:

- Commitment to our mission and objectives to provide leadership in alcohol and other drug policy and practice – Eastern Health is committed to contributing to the alcohol and drugs field in a proactive way.
- Best fit for service delivery and strategy – Eastern Health's mental health, as well as primary and community health services will enable Turning Point to strengthen our ties with the sector and create opportunities for broad psycho-social and clinical practice development.
- Strong governance and leadership – Eastern Health's affiliation with Monash University provides us with collaborative opportunities in clinical, educational and research leadership.

Eastern Health was established in 2000 and is now one of the largest Victorian public health services. It provides a range of acute, sub-acute, mental health and community health services from over fifty sites, with seven main facilities including: Angliss Hospital (Upper Ferntree Gully), Box Hill Hospital (Box Hill), Healesville & District Hospital (Healesville), Maroondah Hospital (Ringwood East), Peter James Centre (Burwood East), Wantirna Health (Wantirna) and Yarra Ranges Health (Lilydale).

Eastern Health actively supports teaching, training and research in the disciplines of medicine, nursing and allied health and is affiliated with a number of universities including Monash University.

Turning Point is currently considering how to work together with Eastern Health, focusing on the strengths and shared interests of both organisations. In the event of amalgamation, we will be working to preserve the merits of both organisations.

Please contact Leon Kurop, Chief Operations Officer if you have any questions about the amalgamation process by emailing leon.kurop@turningpoint.org.au.



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Research to practice

Research Fellow Jacqui Cameron has been awarded the Allens Arthur Robinson Research to Practice Fellowship for 2009.

Allens Arthur Robinson, an international law firm with more than fifteen hundred staff in fourteen cities in Australia, South East Asia and China has built close relationships with charities and has supported them through personal engagement, direct financial support and the provision of pro bono legal assistance.

The funding AAR has provided to Turning Point creates an exciting opportunity in a priority area for the organisation. The fellowship opens up a unique role for a talented health professional to develop Turning Point's capacity to translate research into practice. Jacqui will apply the fellowship to working on file management in an AOD clinical setting.

Previous research has identified an urgent need for AOD workers to address file note recording and management. Jacqui will undertake a group of related activities that will result in the development of a best practice toolkit to assist practitioners within the Victorian AOD sector. The project will involve collaboration between researchers and clinicians to better assist the transfer of research knowledge to practice.



We look forward to seeing the results of this work over the year - congratulations Jacqui and thank you to Allens Arthur Robinson.

For more information contact Anthony Denham on 03 8413 8417.

PhD students

Congratulations to Turning Point staff members who have been awarded PhD scholarships for 2009.

Bridget Roberts, who joined the Health Services Research and Evaluation Team at Turning Point in 2001, has been awarded a scholarship with the School of Rural Health at Monash University. Bridget plans to study the closure of large public institutions in Victoria such as mental health facilities, and how these closures continue to affect the people involved, particularly those living with both mental illness and alcohol and other drug problems.

The Sydney Myer Health Scholarship, which provides three years of funding to recipients has been granted to Michael Livingston and Dr Anne-Marie Laslett, both working in the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research at Turning Point. Michael's project aims to assess the impact of changes in alcohol policy on rates of alcohol-related problems in Victoria. Anne-Marie will look at how

other people's drinking is related to child maltreatment using child protection and Australian general population survey data. The evidence base developed through the proposed work will provide a grounding for a more public-health oriented alcohol policy in Victoria and Australia, with significant public health benefits for the wider community.

Sharon Matthews, a Research Fellow in the Epidemiology program is studying the local culture of drinking and drunkenness, using data from the Australian GENACIS project for her PhD. Some research has already been done in the US and Europe around attitudes to heavy drinking, however, no investigation has been made of the Australian context to date.

The 2009 PhD students join other staff, Caro Clark and Amy Pennay who are currently undertaking postgraduate research degrees.

