



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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South East Asia initiatives

Training for alcohol and other drug workers

Against a background of harsh criminalisation of illicit drug use in most South East Asian countries, problematic substance users are dealt with by the criminal justice and correctional system, making law enforcement and public security the basis of most national and regional policies. However, a burgeoning drug treatment sector in SE Asia is adopting other methods for dealing with drug users – with therapeutic communities committed to piloting methadone maintenance programs.

In September 2006, Turning Point along with partners Chiang Mai University and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) identified a need to strengthen regional responses to the impact of illicit drugs by building the capacity of drug treatment organisations and staff in six targeted countries- Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. A two-year project funded by AusAID will see the completion of a regional training needs assessment and the development of an accredited drug treatment curriculum at Chiang Mai University with staff trained and supported to deliver course subjects.

Currently there is very little formal alcohol and drug training for workers in criminal justice or health. Alcohol is not recognised as a significant public and personal health issue in most SE Asian countries and mental health issues that underlie or compound drug and alcohol problems are also often overlooked. With the growth of alternative approaches to deal with drug-related harm, there is an urgent need in the region to build indigenous capacity for training a growing workforce. As a member of the UNODC Global Network of Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Resource Centres and a leading provider of alcohol and drug training and development, Turning Point is well positioned to engage these countries as well as other Asian-based centres such as Indonesia in the future.

Wendy Dodd from Turning Point, who is managing this project, says: "Currently, five out of the six countries have engaged in a workshop environment to discuss the

idea of what may constitute an alcohol and drug workforce. The groups have been very informative and supportive of the project and of the training needs analysis that will be undertaken in their countries."



Local NSP (needle and syringe program) outreach workers in Muse, Northern Myanmar. Photo: Jo Hayter

In addition to this project, the AusAID Illicit Drugs Initiative is also funding a proposal by Turning Point to build workforce capacity for sustainable, high quality and effective opioid substitution therapy in Asia. The project will establish a working group of specialists, practitioners and trainers from Australia and Asia who will develop best practice guidelines and multiple training programs for methadone prescribers.

Turning Point Project Manager, Jo Hayter, says: "The spectrum of countries involved in this project enables many individuals and organisations who have been isolated from regional training, networking and exchange opportunities to participate in the development of an Asia-wide drug treatment response."

Once operational, the program, which includes ongoing professional support, will develop a sustainable network of institutions responsible for methadone policy and service delivery in Asia.

From the Director...



Welcome to the first edition of Newspot! Turning Point is a unique organisation, working across areas such as research, treatment, education, capacity building and policy development in the alcohol and drug field. Through this regular bulletin, we will bring you news of what Turning Point is doing, how we are growing and responding to the ever more complex variety of harms associated with alcohol and other drugs in our community. We hope that as you get to know Turning Point better, you will join us in realising our vision.

What are the serious health issues confronting Australia at the moment? Obesity, cancer, diabetes, stroke, mental illness, depression... Sure, but where do alcohol and other drugs fit in? Everywhere.

If you look across Australian society you will find evidence of the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs, either behind, or associated with every one of the major health and social problems facing our community. We all know about damage to the physical body – but the effects of alcohol and drugs go well beyond the direct damage they do – ultimately spreading to relationships, families, communities and throughout the whole of society.

Why don't we put the same amount of funding into research of alcohol and drug treatment and prevention that these other health issues receive? Why are alcohol and drugs given so much less importance, despite the fact that they are major causes and compounders of ill-health in our communities?

Turning Point is committed to generating the best evidence-based policies and programs to help those who are affected by alcohol and other drugs realise the best lives they can. This newsletter is but one way in which we can stay in touch with our community and we seek your feedback and input. If you see any opportunities, if we can help or you can help us, please get in touch...

News in Brief

Congratulations to Robin Room who has been elected as President of ADCA, the peak national body for the alcohol and other drug sector. Robin succeeds former federal minister Neal Blewett and has already started his duties, which involves chairing ADCA's Board and joining in ADCA's representation of the sector. Robin has been at Turning Point for almost a year, leading the AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research. Along with researcher Michael Livingston, he is currently working on measuring the effects of increased density of liquor licensing in Victoria. He is also facilitating the GENACIS survey of drinking patterns and problems among adults in Victoria, part of a 30-country study of gender, alcohol and culture with researchers Paul Dietze and Sharon Matthews.

The Psycheck project is now in its third phase with thirteen services from across Australia being trained in how to use the mental health screening and intervention tool as part of their normal clinical practice. In addition to face-to-face training sessions, online support is also available. A web-based portal with forums and discussion groups based on participants' experiences with the PsyCheck tool is being led and monitored by an experienced clinician from Turning Point.

Data collection has begun which will assess the success of PsyCheck Phase III. Clinician and supervisor training will be examined with regard to service outcomes (e.g. detection and treatment rates) as well as personal outcomes for supervisors and clinicians (e.g. skills, confidence). A smaller evaluation will look at client outcomes that may be attributed to the introduction of PsyCheck. The project has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. For more information, contact Dr Nicole Lee, Program Leader, Clinical Research Program on 03 8413 8416 or nicole.lee@turningpoint.org.au

Two new online training courses are available to GPs to develop their understanding of working with and treating heroin dependence. Accessible via GPlearning, the activities will provide a lead in for doctors who wish to become prescribers in opioid substitution maintenance programs. Given that there is an annual increase in demand for pharmacotherapies, it is clear that new strategies are needed to improve access to treatment, reduce the stigma associated with this type of treatment and reduce the current concentration of pharmacotherapy prescribing in a small number of GPs. The DHS-funded project is a joint collaboration between Turning Point, Western Health, Southern Health, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine.

Development Campaign

Turning Point has a unique vision of an integrated centre which uses best practice in the delivery of treatment and counseling services. To achieve this, we need to invest in developing the careers of our best and brightest young clinicians and researchers, build career pathways in neglected professional areas, institute innovative pilot programs which seek the most effective approaches, and deliver world's best practice to the many people in other sectors and agencies who are fighting the same battles we are.

We are about to embark on a Development Campaign, to raise the capital we need for these investments so that our role in and responsibility to the AOD service sector and our communities is sustainable in the future. We have been building our patronage and are very proud that the Governor of Victoria, Dr David de Kretser, has taken on the role as Patron-in-Chief of Turning Point, leading our growing list of supporters which already includes Professor David Penington, Lady Primrose Potter, Professor Peter Doherty and Dr Neal Blewett.

We are increasingly promoting ourselves to the the public through community service announcements on TV, radio and in the press, making our 24-hour telephone (Directline) and web-based (counsellingonline.org.au) services more widely known. We are actively engaged in seeking to partner with others in the field to whose efforts we can add support.

Over the coming two years, we will be seeking corporate and philanthropic partners who share our vision. We will keep you updated on the progress of this campaign through these newsletters and through regular reports on our website. If you would like to know more, please contact us.

Telephone counselling

Recent studies examine the effectiveness of DirectLine



Last year Turning Point submitted the final report for two studies commissioned by the Premier's Drug Prevention Council examining the telephone counselling, information and referral service provided by DirectLine. Staffed by professional counsellors, DirectLine operates 24-hours, seven-days-a-week

and receives more than 60,000 calls from the Victorian community each year about problem alcohol and drug use.

The first of two studies used a questionnaire to assess the role of DirectLine in the help-seeking behaviour of substance users. Forty-five per cent of survey participants identified their contact with DirectLine as a first attempt at seeking help or advice in relation to their alcohol or drug problem. Thirty per cent reported that they had previously used the service, with 25% of those having done so in the past year. Significantly, 1 in 5 callers were using DirectLine for support in addition to other treatment they were receiving. Satisfaction with DirectLine services was high, with 93% satisfied and 3% partially satisfied with the outcomes from their treatment.

The second study examined the referral function of DirectLine, by determining the rates at which callers went on to access other treatment options. Sixty-four per cent of survey participants reported having some contact with the agency they had been referred to, with 30% of all participants attending at least one help session. Of the participants who chose not to attend

treatment at the referral agency, 24% sought help with another service provider. Reasons identified for not contacting the agency were that the caller's situation improved or he/she helped themselves (26%), the caller lost the details of the referral (9%), the caller felt attending was inconvenient (9%) or was uncomfortable about attending (9%). Among callers that contacted an agency, barriers to treatment included difficulty in getting through (14%), referral on to another provider (12%) or large waiting lists (7%).

This study reported a high proportion of successful referrals using traditional passive referral techniques. It also highlighted areas where more active referral methods, such as direct scheduling of appointments or proactive caller follow-up, have the potential to improve the referral outcome. Proactive referral techniques may assist clients in overcoming some of the barriers identified. In addition, many callers were utilising both fact-to-face and telephone-based counseling. This raises the issue of continuity of care across the service system and out-of-hours needs.

The two studies were a joint collaboration between Turning Point's Epidemiology and Surveillance and Healthlink program areas. The researchers involved wish to thank the DirectLine counsellors for their efforts in participant recruitment and data collection and the Premier's Drug Prevention Council for providing funds to conduct this research. For more information about these studies, contact Susan Clemens on 03 8413 8425.

A copy of the summary of the two studies can be downloaded from the Premier's Drug Prevention Council website at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pdpc/downloads/directline.pdf>

PROGRAM PROFILE

Support Groups

An exciting new program area is in development at Turning Point and involves a range of support groups being offered to meet the needs of clients.

The Post Withdrawal Group runs for 4 weeks and provides assistance to people during a critical time in their recovery when they may have detoxed, are motivated to reduce or abstain from drugs, or are waiting for residential rehab and are in need of additional support. Areas covered include relapse prevention, goal setting, managing anxiety and stress, and relaxation skills. For more information contact the intake team on 8413 8444.

'Jewel Diagnosis' meets on Mondays at 10.30am. This peer support group allows people with a mental health and drug and alcohol issue to talk about their situation in a non-threatening, supportive environment. Contact Monica on 0431 676 304.

Another dual diagnosis initiative, the Anxiety Clinic, will start up soon. The Clinic offers both group and individual treatment



for anxiety disorders. Contact the intake team on 8413 8444 for more information.

The Hep C support group runs fortnightly on Mondays from 5.30-7pm. Contact Kirk on 8413 8459.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Methadone Anonymous (MA) meetings are also held at Turning Point. NA meets on Wednesdays 4-5pm and MA meets on Tuesdays 4-5pm. Contact the intake team on 8413 8444 for more information.

