



**Turning Point**  
Alcohol & Drug Centre

# ALCOHOL SCREENING AND BRIEF INTERVENTION IN HOSPITALS

## Evaluation of a pilot project

Principal researcher: Dr Lynda Berends

Evaluation commissioned by Department of Human Services, Hume Region.  
Evaluation partners: Northeast Health Wangaratta and Albury Wodonga Health

### The project

A three year pilot project:

- Integrating alcohol screening and brief interventions (SBI) into routine acute practice in two regional hospitals
- Improving referral pathways and developing a model
- Promoting the provision of withdrawal services within the hospital environment
- Funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services (Hume Region) from July 2006 to June 2009 and conducted by Northeast Health Wangaratta and Albury Wodonga Health (formerly Wodonga Regional Health Service.)



### Project significance

Because ...

- Accurate information on current alcohol use may be critical to an individual's hospital treatment
- Rates of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms in the region are above the State average. Of particular concern are high levels of recent binge drinking among young people, and engagement by young adults in alcohol-fuelled assaults and alcohol-related domestic incidents
- Alcohol-related hospital admissions are high, whether related to accidental injury, violence, or a wide range of illnesses including hypertension and gastro-intestinal problems
- In a regional and rural context hospitals are often involved when alcohol-related crises occur
- An individual's hospital admission can be a window of opportunity for re-thinking alcohol use

... this project has the potential to...

- Add to the evidence base concerning screening and brief interventions in hospital emergency and other wards
- Demonstrate ways in which hospitals may be able to improve patient care, engage with alcohol use as a population health issue and prevent or reduce pressure on acute health services.



### The evaluation

Turning Point has been commissioned to work with Northeast Health and Wodonga Regional Health to evaluate the project's impact and outcomes.

Questions include:

- What have been the benefits in relation to screening, brief interventions and assisted referral?
- Has the intervention affected staff attitudes and skills?
- What are the main benefits and challenges of systematising SBI?
- How can SBI and referral be sustained?

The evaluation **method** has four components:

- Preliminary consultations with key project stakeholders, who are partners in the evaluation
- Analysis of data collected by the hospitals during the project. This is considerable and includes the number of AUDIT screens and BIs conducted, a summary of the proportion indicating high, medium and low risk of harmful drinking, as well as 'process' information such as minutes of project meetings
- An on-line survey with nurses at the sites where the SBI project was implemented
- Interviews with AOD program managers from the region's community AOD services (Ovens & King Community Health and Gateway Community Health) to explore changes in referral pathways
- Reviewing findings with project stakeholders and reaching conclusions on the key evaluation questions.

### Next steps

The evaluation findings will be reported to the Department of Human Services later in 2009.

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