



AOD eNews **May 2021**

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1. Central and Eastern Sydney PHN

Author: Chris Keyes, Drug Health Manager

Update from CESPHN

We are excited to announce that the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Action Plan is now available to view and download via our website [here](#). This piece of work was completed in collaboration with a range of stakeholders who dedicated their time to participate in our MHAOD Working Party across 2019 and 2020.

The background to this plan is that CESPHN recognised that people who experience co-occurring mental health and drug and alcohol conditions can experience barriers to effective service provision. We worked in partnership with the [Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use](#), to understand the experiences of people who seek services as well as health care providers and this delivered important recommendations for increasing the capacity of the workforce to respond to people with co-occurring needs.

With the launch of the [National Comorbidity Guidelines](#) and training by the Matilda Centre, we saw a timely opportunity to leverage the introduction of these resources and further the objective to build workforce capacity.

We convened the working party to progress this work in partnership and developed an action plan to build system and workforce capacity to deliver holistic and integrated care that focuses on treating the person, not the illness.

Implementation of planned activities is underway; for example we're developing a dedicated MH & AOD webpage on the CESPHN website and have arranged training in co-occurring mental health and AOD for the workforce.

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch with Esther Toomey, Drug Health Program Officer (e.toomey@cesphn.com.au).

Upcoming training and workshop opportunities:

As part of the work mentioned above, we have provided workshops to support workers to effectively support people with co-occurring needs, through “Double Whammy’ workshops provided by CCWT. These recently commenced in April and May, and have been well attended by people working in mental health and AOD roles. More dates are to be announced soon for September and October 2021.

2. Kirketon Road Centre

Author: Julie Dubuc

Kirketon Road Centre Covid Response

KRC staff and consumers recently joined over 100 people from across the globe for the online premiere of a short film that looked behind the scenes of KRC’s innovative COVID-19 outreach program.

After the premiere of the film, the KRC team were joined by peer educator Koketso Mokubane from South Africa and Maryam Alavi, a senior research fellow from Iran. Together, they shared global perspectives on how their respective countries and organisations have adapted during COVID-19.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3limHM4paBE>

3. The Station Ltd - Drop in Centre

Author: Graciela Luna & Martina Talcevska

An update from The Station Drop in Centre

The Station Ltd. is situated in the inner city area of Sydney, close to railway and buses, allowing easy access for vulnerable and disadvantage individuals. Staff promote mental health and well-being, with the prevention of substance use. These are integral parts of the support that we bring to our community.

As an essential service we continue to engage in practices that reduce the spread of Covid-19. Practices include, social distancing and staff wear masks and gloves. The Station has undergone decontamination and disinfection safety procedures in all areas. The use of hands sanitizer is used before entering the Centre. All meals are prepared in house and served in takeaway containers at the front veranda by staff and team of volunteers. Showers and laundry are available with limited time only. Face to face client assessments are 15 minutes per client.

Once a week a team of medical practitioners attend the centre. A GP, Registered Nurse, Mental Health Clinician and Psychiatrist are the authorised people to provide assessment, diagnosis, treatment, care, observation, health evaluation or professional advice.

The Centre operates 7 days a week. Services are available Monday to Friday: from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. Sat & Sun from 7.30 am to 2.00 pm. Centrelink and Medicare card are the only requirements.

The Station has two permanent Alcohol & Other Drug workers and Mental Health Worker among five Welfare workers which are available Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm.

Services available at The Station Ltd Drop-In-Centre are: Meals (takeaway only), Showers, Laundry facilities, Housing Support Program, Dental Care, Referrals and Advocacy services.

Catchment area: Inner City of Sydney and its surroundings.
Address: 82 Erskine St, Sydney NSW 2000 / Ph: 02 9299 2252

4. Weave Youth and Community Services

Author: Speak Out Dual Diagnosis, Weave Youth and Community Services

'What Is Your Utopia? – Weave Youth Week

Since December last year, the Weave Youth Advocates have been working hard on creating a platform for young people to share their voices and inspire hope and connection after a difficult 2020.

Using their skills in interviewing, podcasting and holding space for other young people, the Youth Advocates have created and facilitated a YouTube Podcast series for Youth Week 2021, called 'What Is Your Utopia?'

'What Is Your Utopia?' is a series of conversations with young people from across the city, sharing their vision for the change they want to see in the world and in their communities, and how they can bring about that change as a young person.

As they embrace this year's Youth Week theme - 'Together more than ever', these conversations are full of authenticity, as this diverse and passionate group of young people speak to their desire of living in a more inclusive, compassionate and kind society. The young people involved in this project are connected to Weave, Twenty10, MYAN, Reach, ATYP and School Strike for Climate.

Tune in to hear a series of episodes on the below channels:

- Weave Youth and Community Services YouTube Channel
- Weave Instagram @weave_youth
- Weave Facebook @weaveyouthfamily
- Weave What You Don't Hear Podcast on Spotify, Apple and Google Podcasts.



'The system isn't broken either, that's the way it was designed in the first place. Unfortunately, through the power of money, it's something we can't change. We can only change within ourselves or within our own communities, start in our own households, build our own kids up, we're never going to change those people on top.' - Karl



'No matter how big or small the impact you make, it is still an impact. Even if it is just making someone smile for that one day, it will still mean something to that one person.' - Nabilah



'Be more inclusive of different disabilities, different sexual orientations, different ethnicities and everything, because what you are right now isn't as inclusive and you need to work on that.' - Jade

A massive congratulations to every young person who shared their voice, and a special thank you to Sienna, Karah, Lizzi, Zola and Naz for their incredible vision and hard work on this project!

5. Sydney Local Health District

Author: *Drug Health Services, SLHD*

Drug Health Services Primary Health Care Clinic

The Primary Health Care Clinic provides comprehensive, wrap-around care for people with complex health needs associated with drug and alcohol use. Located at Turner Street Redfern within Sydney Local Health District's Harm Reduction Program, the clinic is staffed by a Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC), registered nurse, two social workers and an addiction medicine registrar who attends once per week.

This case shows how engagement with a range of health providers over a period of time was able to achieve very significant and sustained change in health and addressed a number of serious risks.

Akira* is a 46 year old woman who was referred to the clinic from the Sydney Dental Hospital about 12 months ago because she presented with a black eye and disclosed domestic violence and drug use.

On assessment, the CNC identified that Akira was from a CALD background had moved to Sydney 15 years ago with her ex-husband. She stated she was injecting methamphetamine and was Hep C positive. She had a history of depression and suicidal ideation, no social supports, no GP and multiple domestic violence episodes with her ex-partner and current partner, but declined to make a police report. She was living in social housing and had requested to be relocated for her safety.

On the second presentation to the clinic she had further injuries to her head and disclosed that serious threats to her life were being made by her current partner. As per mandatory reporting policy, the clinic reported the domestic violence to the police. Akira's case was referred to the Community Safety Action Meeting (an interagency between Health, Justice, Housing, Police et al) and a safety action plan was put into place which is reviewed with her regularly.

Akira was seen by the Mental Health CNC in the weekly mental health clinic on site and was linked in with a GP who put a mental health plan in place. Ultrasound guided venepuncture and liver ultrasound were provided as part of Hep C treatment work up and she received a Hep B vaccination regime. The clinic provided sexual health and cervical screening and counselling was provided by the RPA Sexual Health clinic. Vein care and safe injecting practices were reviewed and Akira was provided with sterile injecting equipment.

Akira has completed drug rehabilitation and commenced Hep C treatment. Her outstanding fines have been paid through a Workplace Development Order which includes attendance at counselling with the Drug Health Services social worker and the clinic. She has been rehoused and found a job three months ago. She continues regular reviews with her GP.

For information, support or referral, please contact the Primary Health Care Clinic during business hours on 9395 0400.

* name changed to protect identity

6. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)

Author: Andreas Aegler / CRC

CRC at the NADA Conference 2021

On Thursday 22 April and Friday 23 April CRC's AOD team attended NADA Conference 2021, which focused on enhancing connections between organisations and their clients, and on reducing AOD stigma in society and the media.

Many amazing people presented at the conference including inspirational talks by WEAVE youth advocates, and author of *Woman of Substances: A Journey into Addiction and Treatment* Jenny Valentish.

Practical workshops were also available for any attendees to join and CRC attended a few including one facilitated by Jamie Berry from Advanced Neurological Treatment Services (ANTS) about identifying and responding to cognitive impairment using the Alcohol and Drug Cognitive Enhancement tool (ACE). This tool serves as a way to assess for cognitive impairment in clients and it highlighted how common cognitive impairment is amongst not just people experiencing AOD dependencies, but also the general population. CRC's AOD team will begin using the ACE tool for assessment of clients for not only case-management purposes, but for clients' own insight and understanding of their cognitive issues which is often a vital roadblock to treatment and recovery. To read more about the ACE tool visit <https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/ace-program>.

On day two of the conference the focus shifted on reducing media and societal AOD stigma and Paul Barry, presenter of ABC's Mediawatch, made an excellent keynote presentation around how the media in Australia and the world have heavily leaned on the moral panic of AOD addiction, especially around the "ice epidemic" of recent years, often through baseless, incorrect, and stigmatising reporting. Ways to engage with the media were touched upon, as well as the importance of language in reducing stigma amongst society and changing the narrative around AOD addiction and criminalisation.

CRC's-own Dr Mindi Sotiri, in conjunction with UNSW, also presented at the conference around incredible research that has been undertaken around how client engagement with CRC has led to massive reductions in criminal justice system involvement. The research will be made publicly available soon, so watch this space.

As a special side note, CRC would like to congratulate our Far West NSW team in Broken Hill and Wilcannia for receiving a NADA certificate of commendation for their brilliant work and commitment in helping First Nations people and communities with AOD issues. Congrats guys!

7. South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Author: SESLHD Mental Health Service

Suicide Prevention Initiatives Launched

On 21 April 2021, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) Mental Health Service officially launched SafeHaven in Belgrave Street, Kogarah, and the Suicide Prevention Outreach Team (SPOT), based at Sutherland Hospital. Cronulla Sharks players Jackson Ferris and Royce Hunt and representatives from KOPS (Knock Out Play School) boxing and mental health program joined officials from SESLHD and the Ministry of Health to celebrate the launch.

Both SPOT and SafeHaven are components of the NSW Health Towards Zero Suicide Program, which is a NSW Premier's Priority investing \$87 million over three years into new suicide prevention initiatives.

SafeHaven

SafeHaven is a drop-in service that provides an alternative to attending an emergency department for people experiencing emotional distress or suicidal crisis. It provides a safe, non-judgemental place where everyone is welcome.

The SafeHaven team are mostly peer workers, who draw upon their own personal lived experience of surviving a suicidal crisis and recovery. They are in a unique position to build connections and rapport with people, providing authentic engagement and inspiring hope.

Guests can remain anonymous and can choose to chat with peer workers, have a cuppa, join in an activity or sit in a quiet spot and listen to music. Assistance is also provided with finding other services that meet immediate or longer term needs.

To access SafeHaven, please call 9113 2981 or just walk in! The SafeHaven is located at 20/24 Belgrave St, Kogarah (entry via Kensington Street) and operates Monday, Tuesday and Friday between 3.00 pm - 6.30 pm and Saturday 1.30 pm - 6.30 pm. It is available for people 16 years and older, and no appointments or referrals are required.



Suicide Prevention Outreach Team (SPOT)

SPOT, based at Sutherland Hospital, is an assertive outreach service that supports people in the community. It is non-acute service which offers a three to six week package of care to people experiencing a situational crisis or suicidal distress. It expands SESLHD's suicide prevention resources, so that more people receive support, more quickly, in a location where they feel comfortable.

It is a co-produced, recovery-orientated and trauma-informed assertive outreach program, with a focus on building upon the individual's existing supports and strengths.

SPOT provides individuals with emotional support, coping skills, distress management, and assists program participants to access and engage with ongoing support services. To access SPOT, phone the state-wide mental health access line on 1800 011 511.



8. Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

Author: Uniting media team – Belinda Noble

Uniting MSIC Anniversary Brings Hope of Drug Reform

The Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (Uniting MSIC) has celebrated 20 years of operation in Sydney's Kings Cross with an event and presentation of 500 hearts to NSW parliament.

The hearts were inscribed with personal messages from MSIC clients and staff and were formally presented to the Harm Minimisation Cross Party Parliamentary group on the steps of NSW parliament house yesterday.

Uniting MSIC was the first in the English-speaking world and has supervised more than 1.2 million injections without a single drug-related death. Staff have successfully managed 10,611 overdoses and made nearly 20,000 referrals to treatment and support services.

The Moderator of the Uniting Church (NSW & ACT), Rev. Simon Hansford, said the Uniting Church was very proud of Uniting MSIC, of its involvement and of course what the service has achieved in the last two decades. “The work of Uniting MSIC is hospitality at its very best, it is restorative, we welcome people exactly as they are...it is the right thing to do,” Rev. Hansford said.

Medical Director, Dr Marianne Jauncey, said the 20-year record spoke for itself. “There is nobody sensible left who doesn’t acknowledge that supervised injecting centres save lives, make a difference, take injecting off the street and the question remains why there’s only one.” “It’s an enormous privilege to work with our clients who are some of the most inspiring people I know. Sydney should be proud that we have a place where some of our most disadvantaged and stigmatised citizens can go and receive health care with dignity and compassion.”

The anniversary gathering in Sydney raised questions about the need for other harm reduction services in the state, along with decriminalisation – which has been recommended by the Deputy Coroner and the Special Inquiry into the Drug ‘Ice’.

Health Minister, Brad Hazzard told the crowd, “I think the decriminalisation has challenges for some. I’m certainly of the view, one of those, that thinks criminalising people for the personal use of drugs is completely counterproductive.”

Former NSW Premier, Bob Carr, who was in power when Uniting MSIC opened said politicians should have confidence to have an honest dialogue about drug use, drug testing and harm minimisation. “If I was Premier today I would be confident with saying to the community, ‘Look, we might just experiment with this... as the lesser of two evils.’ We took the advice of people in the field. If we keep people alive...there will come a time in their lives when they’ll give it up.”

It’s a sentiment that holds true for people like Kevin Street. The former client of Uniting MSIC now volunteers at Uniting and produces a newsletter for the service.

“Without Uniting MSIC many of us would not be alive today. It has helped put thousands on a path to recovery. I’m very grateful to the politicians, police and media that supported Uniting MSIC 20 years ago and I hope more people in the future will be lucky enough to have the support I have had in the long journey of recovering for drug addiction.”



9. The Matilda Centre, The University of Sydney

Author: Dr Katrina Prior

JUST LAUNCHED: 'Re-Train Your Brain', the new online brain training program for young people wanting to reduce anxiety and control their alcohol use

Re-Train Your Brain is a new online brain training program for people who drink to cope with anxiety. It involves targeting unconscious mental habits associated with drinking and anxiety through cognitive bias modification. The program is designed as an adjunct for people currently receiving in-clinic treatment.

Background

Social anxiety and alcohol use disorders commonly co-occur, resulting in a more severe clinical presentation and poorer response to treatment. Most treatments that currently exist for social anxiety and alcohol use problems seek to change unhealthy mental habits at a conscious or explicit level (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy [CBT]). However, there is accumulating evidence that anxiety and drinking are affected by processes operating at a subconscious, implicit level.

Thankfully, scientific research has shown that these subconscious mental habits can be improved via "brain training" programs (known as Approach Bias Modification [ApBM] and Interpretation Bias Modification [IBM]). ApBM and IBM are complementary and effective treatment approaches that have been shown to enhance standard treatments such as CBT. Despite their encouraging findings for anxiety or alcohol use individually, the clinical utility of combining ApBM and IBM programs to optimise standard treatments among comorbid samples has not been explored. It is also unknown whether provision of a comorbidity focused ApBM+IBM training program at an earlier age (and earlier in the course of their disorder) represents a promising opportunity to intervene before problems become chronic and entrenched in adulthood.

Study aims

This study aims to investigate the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary efficacy of the 'Re-Train Your Brain' intervention – an adjunct internet-delivered ApBM+IBM program – among a clinical sample of young adults with problematic alcohol use and social anxiety.

Eligibility

Participants aged 18-30 years who are currently receiving psychological treatment for anxiety or alcohol use are invited to participate in the trial. Eligible participants will be randomly allocated to receive either:

1. the online Re-Train Your Brain program (delivered in one of two formats) in addition to treatment as usual, or
2. treatment as usual only.

Participants will be asked to complete 3 surveys and cognitive assessments over 3-months and will be reimbursed with a \$30 gift voucher at each time point.

What can you do?

If you or a young person you know might find this program beneficial, please visit the Re-Train Your Brain [website](#). For further information about the Re-Train Your Brain project, please email Dr Katrina Prior (Chief Investigator) at katrina.prior@sydney.edu.au.

