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## STOP PRESS:

Mental health recognised worldwide as a major contributor to disability. See Opinion on Page 9

# ADCA Patron Welcomes New Board President

ADCA patron Professor Ian Webster AO has welcomed the confirmation of Dr Mal Washer MP as the new President of the ADCA Board.

"I am certain that the alcohol and other drugs sector will benefit from a combination of Dr Washer's hands-on approach during his long and successful career in medicine and his drive and passion to successfully deliver health and wellbeing to Australian communities since entering federal politics in 1998," Professor Webster said.

"As President, Dr Washer follows in the footsteps of a former Minister for Health, Dr Neal Blewett AC and the immediate past president, Professor Robin Room, who has completed his six year term in the position."

Professor Webster said that Dr Washer's appointment, along with the successful candidates who stood for four director positions in the ADCA Board election, was ratified at ADCA's Annual General Meeting in Melbourne in November.

"Congratulations go to Dr Stefan Gruenert, CEO of Odyssey House in Victoria, and Associate Professor Lynne Magor-Blatch, Executive Officer of the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association, who were re-elected as directors. They are joined by new faces, Ms Jeannie Little OAM, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elder from Cairns, and Ms Jill Rundle, CEO of the Western Australia Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies in Perth," Professor Webster said.

Other board members, Vice-President Professor Alison Ritter and directors Ms Donna Bull and Ms Carrie Fowlie, did not have to contest the election as their terms don't expire until next year.



**Incoming and outgoing: Former ADCA President Professor Robin Room (right) hands over trade secrets to his successor, Dr Mal Washer MP.**

Professor Webster expressed his confidence in Dr Washer's determination and ability to succeed Professor Room who he described as being "a steady hand in the morass of public angst and political indecision in the AOD field".

The CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia, Michael Moore, said Dr Washer brought a wealth of experience to the AOD sector with his commitment to achieving the eradication of extreme poverty, promoting general equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and many other diseases.

"He also chairs the Australian Parliamentary Group on Drug Law Reform which was set up in 1993 with membership from Federal and State/ Territory Parliaments."

ADCA CEO David Templeman paid tribute to outgoing president Professor Robin Room, former directors, Dr Alex Wodak AM and Tony Trimingham and independent directors, Mick Palmer AO APM, and Honorary Research Fellow Violet Bacon.



## From the CEO's desk

# Drawing breath over Christmas

The past 12 months have been busy beyond belief on the Australian drug and alcohol front and the Christmas break is a welcome respite as we ready ourselves for what already appears will be a frenetic 2013.

In 2012, the four decade-long international "war on drugs" occupied a significant space – more for opinions over the course of the year on its failure than for any advances in curbing illicit drugs.

Just before retiring from the ADCA Board mid-year, former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Palmer offered such an opinion. He wrote, "To pretend this country's drug prohibition system is working, that it's really as good as we can expect of ourselves, is nonsense."

Mick concluded that no matter how effective police investigations, no matter how many criminals were apprehended, "The end result, and the more you look at it the more obvious it becomes, is we make no difference. For us to be satisfied at the government level and at the community level with the current state of play is for us to put our heads in the sand."

This comes from the man who for some time led Australia's anti-drug push. But one could never doubt the courage of his convictions and we applaud his wholehearted embrace of the Australia 21 movement and its call for decriminalisation of a range of drugs. Australia 21, which issued two milestone reports over the course of the year, is appealing for a more realistic approach to how authorities handle young Australians and their relationship with drugs.

We can only hope that Mick's all-too-honest stance might translate to our broader society's position on alcohol, a drug vastly more costly to Australia's health than all others combined.

*"governments unwilling to grasp the nettle on alcohol"*

The common factor might be the unwillingness of governments at all levels to grasp the nettle. Society may be far more comfortable with police and law enforcement agencies being seen to continue their efforts against drugs, and very much against a government that supports decriminalisation. Where alcohol is concerned, governments seem unwilling to take on

the might of the liquor industry, the manufacturers, pubs and clubs who are only too willing to put considerable resources into marketing ploys which can ultimately cause lasting social and economic harm.

As the Christmas break is upon us, ADCA hopes that people from all walks of life are mindful of the effects, the lasting harm that drugs and alcohol can wreak. Flinders University's National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction recently published a literature review prepared as background to a *Domestic and Family Violence Resource for the AOD Sector* project into the causes of family and domestic violence across the broader welfare system.

All too often, someone's Christmas is ruined as a result of family and domestic violence where alcohol and drugs are the catalyst. This may be due to a lack of services – compromised by lack of funding, inexperienced and overworked staff – that prevent timely intervention.

In a slightly more light-hearted vein, ADCA urges holiday makers to take care where drugs, alcohol and recreation meet. Western Australia's Fiona Wood mentions elsewhere in this edition the disastrous consequences of mixing drugs and alcohol with fire, with 60 per cent of admissions to Royal Perth Hospital's burns unit she manages being the result of drug or alcohol misadventure.

And, contrary to popular belief, water and alcohol are a poor mix, with drugs and drink present in a growing number of drownings – particularly on inland waterways. Sailors, waterskiers, swimmers and divers all need to have their wits about them if we are to avoid such unfortunate accidents. The end point is that so many such incidents ARE avoidable.

So too on the roads. There are a lot more people sharing the blacktop over the holidays, so give yourselves more time to get places and make sure you're well rested before embarking on those vacation road marathons.

The Board of Directors and ADCA staff wish you a peaceful, restful break. We thank you for your assistance and support and look forward to resuming the good fight together again in 2013.

**David Templeman,**  
ADCA Chief Executive Officer

# Here is the News

## AOD sector review gearing up



**John Shevlin, Assistant Secretary Mental Health and Drug Treatment Division, Department of Health and Ageing.**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this issue of ADCA News.

**I am the Assistant Secretary, Substance Misuse and Indigenous Wellbeing Programs in the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.**

Appointed to the position in August this year, I am responsible for substance misuse treatment policies and programs in the Mental Health and Drug Treatment Division. The relevance of this role to ADCA and other organisations of its ilk lies in the fact that I manage the Non-Government Organisations Treatment Grants Program and the Substance Misuse Service Delivery Grants Fund.

This first five months has been busy and educative and I have been deeply impressed by the passion and commitment of all those involved in the treatment services sector. It is clearly demanding work but the rewards are considerable in terms of the difference that can be made in the lives of those struggling with addiction. Success, however, is not easy and requires a collaborative approach if improvements are to be lasting.

There is a high demand for services and this continues to grow faster than the level of available funding. That was highlighted in the funding round in late 2011 when the Commonwealth received more than 520 applications, of which it could fund only slightly over half. The loss of Commonwealth funding has a direct impact on the range of services that organisations provide, with a flow-on effect on individual clients, their families and friends and their communities.

The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing Mark Butler MP acknowledges this, and has announced a review of the Alcohol and other Drugs treatment services sector. The terms of reference for the review are nearly finalised and the Department

expects to engage a consultant early next year to take on this important work. The review will seek to ensure that existing resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible to deliver quality, sustainable drug and alcohol treatment services that meet community needs.

The review aims to ensure that the allocation of Commonwealth, state and territory funding avoids service delivery gaps, reduces the potential for duplication and enables better targeted funding through greater clarity of Commonwealth and jurisdictional priorities and planning processes. The review will build on work already underway in a number of jurisdictions. These include the national Drug and Alcohol Clinical Care and Prevention Modelling Project led by NSW Health on behalf of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, the Quality Framework and Funding Model and the Patient Pathways Project among others.

The Department will work closely with jurisdictions and representatives of the Alcohol and other Drugs treatment services sector on the review process. An Expert Advisory Group, which will include ADCA and representatives of state and territory peak bodies, is being formed to help guide the work of the consultant and keep the Department informed. The advisory group will also involve other representatives from state and territory governments and specialists in service delivery, models of care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use.

The previous funding round had its problems, and this review will take place within a timeframe that will allow its findings and recommendations to inform the next round scheduled for late 2014. We are determined to learn from the experience of the last year and will work to deliver a more streamlined and flexible process. To assist this objective the Department will support a number of capacity building initiatives to allow existing service providers to prepare strong and compliant funding applications.

Managing the conduct of the review will be a priority activity for me in 2013. It is critical that we accurately identify current funding patterns, ongoing service needs and any delivery gaps or areas of potential duplication. Only when we know what is funded, where these services are delivered and who is accessing them can we be confident that funds are going to areas of the greatest need and that the means exist to deliver appropriate and effective programs and services.

I look forward to working with the sector on the review and implementing its agreed recommendations.

**John Shevlin**



## APSAD 2012: Culture of Change

More than 550 people from ten countries attended the annual conference of the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) in Melbourne in November.

The conference theme, *Culture of Change*, reflected the shifting environment for alcohol and other drug policy, research and practice activities in Australia. The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre was a welcoming and efficient stage for a dynamic program.

Discussion and debate with interactive symposia, dedicated poster sessions and late breaking research featured alongside oral paper presentations. The latter included practice, policy and treatment areas, as well as population trends and co-morbidities. Workshops focused on alcohol and other drug treatment needs of older people (60+ years) and managing co-morbid anxiety and depression in alcohol and drug treatment.

Keynote speakers challenged current thinking at policy and practice levels; Dr Alex Wodak encouraged delegates to pause and contemplate how taxed and regulated cannabis would look; Professor Alison Ritter highlighted motivations behind the pursuit of solutions to problems not necessarily well-defined; and Professor Robert West emphasised the benefits of offering alcohol and other drug clients' assistance with tobacco use cessation.

Dr John Marsden explored how to get psychological therapies to work better with medication assisted treatments for heroin use disorders. Professor Ann Roche suggested we 'think big' in terms of integrated systems of care, and A/Professor Kyp Kypri described web-based interventions for unhealthy alcohol use. Dr Joao Castel-Branco Goulao described benefits from the decriminalisation of drug use in Portugal.

This year's James Rankin Oration was delivered by A/Professor Robert Ali, who reflected on advances in pharmacotherapy treatment in Australia.

Innovation featured in individual presentations, including the exploration of harms from energy drinks and alcohol, interventions for older people with risky alcohol use, and the evolution of smartphone applications for addiction recovery.

The conference also considered alcohol pricing reforms and bringing alcohol under the international drug control umbrella. Workshops on alcohol and other drug liaison in hospitals, responding to co-morbid mental health concerns, and recent developments in addiction neuroscience and their relevance to clinical practice highlighted the translational nature of the conference, and considering new research in terms of practice implications.

Congratulations to the winners of this year's APSAD awards: Professor Alison Ritter (Senior Scientist Award); Annalea Stearne (First People's Award); and Dr Adrian Carter (Early Career Award).

Around sixty people presented posters and national and international leaders conducted tours on posters they felt had particular merit. Guides included Jan Copeland, Alison Ritter, Robert West, John Marsden, Kyp Kypri, Leanne Hides and Robin Room. The tours involved informal discussions with poster authors and delegates to draw out methodological

challenges and key findings. A number of posters were short-listed and prizes awarded to Peter Miller and Angela Rintoul (runner up), with honourable mentions to Rachel Deacon, Alex Grove, Qian Wang, Kevin Foreman, and David Allsop.

The Late Breaker session was characterised by short, sharp and fiery presentations on recent project findings. Session chair Dr Ingrid van Beek rigorously kept presenters to their five minute limit, ensuring the snap, crackle and pop never went out of this popular forum. Joseph Van Buskirk won the late breaker award for his discussion about the on-line availability of illicit substances via the Silk Road marketplace. Katherine McLachlan and Petra Staiger were close runners up, with their work on alcohol policy research and brief alcohol intervention in residential drug treatment.

Next year's conference, from 24-27 November, is in sunny Brisbane and promises to be another showcase of the fascinating challenges and developments in alcohol and other drug work in Australia and overseas.



**ADCA Vice-President Professor Alison Ritter (second from right) winner of the APSAD Senior Scientist award with (from left) Dr Adrian Carter (Early Career award), APSAD President Professor Amanda Baker and Annalea Stearne (First Peoples award).**



**APSAD's founding President Professor James Rankin and Professor Ann Roche, Director of the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) at Flinders University. Professor Rankin established the first medically-based combined clinical and academic program for the treatment and study of alcoholism in Australia at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne in 1964.**

## Fiona Wood; where average doesn't get a look in

There were a few askance glances when it was revealed that renowned burns specialist and 2005 Australian of the Year Fiona Wood was to address ADCA's AGM dinner in November. "What's the point of a burns person speaking to alcohol and drug people?" seemed to be a common response.

Wood, sounding fresh off Ilkley Moor despite better than 25 years in Australia, quickly showed that she was an admirable choice.

After more than 20 years managing the Royal Perth Hospital burns unit, medical practitioner, mother of six and wannabe sports hero Wood said she had come to learn ... then went on to show how much we could learn from her.

She spoke of technology, of innovation, of the privilege she felt in working in the "best health system in the world", and stressed the importance of collaboration. "We're all in it together – we need to foster our belief in each other – the integrity of all rather than the intellect of a few."

The audience was along for the ride when Wood revealed that 60 per cent of patients in her burns unit were there due to drug or alcohol misadventure. And she was quick to give a grounding in first aid for burns, highlighting the healing powers of cool running water; provided it's administered for 20 minutes in the first hour, it will reduce the extent of injury by 80 per cent.

"There's a truckload of preventable problems. Were we able to reduce binge drinking by a single per cent, our burns unit would change," Wood said. The average patient at the unit is a 28 year old male and the minimum cost of treatment for someone with

burns to a quarter of their body surface is around \$70,000 – that is just the acute care, what about the life time potential lost?"

And drugs were never too far from the equation, with Wood revealing that in the past 24 months, the burns unit has been at the front line of treatment for the victims of more meth lab explosions than anywhere else in Australia.

"When the patients sit back to admire the productivity of their work in a lab, the heat and dry conditions mean the ingredients are in the atmosphere and then they light a cigarette ... their life changes forever in a way that can't be imagined. No-one can imagine the pain of a burn.

"And when they have had a carton of beer, decide to leap over a bonfire but land in the middle of it, again a life is changed forever. Not even Carl Lewis could do it on a good day."

If there's a plus in burns rehabilitation work, Wood says it comes with patients using the drugs involved in their treatment for pain to shake other addictions.

She expressed horror at the culture of drugs and alcohol in sport, recounting the experience of a young teetotal nephew in the UK playing rugby league – a "dog" of a game – where he is under intense pressure to use drugs to bulk up and to drink after matches. She asks whether cyclists will take the unique opportunity recent scandals have presented to address drug use in their sport.

"Utopia ... it's something we dismiss as a dream but, unless we dream, how will we ever improve our situation?"

Wood's message was powerful and compelling, yet elegant in its simplicity.

"We need to learn something from yesterday ... to be the best we can be ... there's no sense in getting up in the morning to be average."



Fiona Wood with David Templeman and Dr Mal Washer.



Fiona fields questions from the floor with David Templeman.

# Theme/ Dates Set for Drug Action Week 2013

The theme of *Drugs, Communities & Families!* will determine the direction of Drug Action Week (DAW) 2013, backed by strong supporting daily themes.

An ADCA coordinated alcohol and other drugs awareness initiative supported by the Federal Government through the Department of Health and Ageing, DAW 2013 will run from Sunday 16 June through to Saturday 22 June.

ADCA CEO David Templeman says a highlight of the week will be presentation of the 2013 National Drug and Alcohol Awards in the Great Hall at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday 20 June.

"Following on from the highly successful DAW 2011 and 2012 theme of *Looking After YOUR Mind!*, feedback from stakeholders across the alcohol and other drugs sector during evaluation of DAW 2012 indicated the need for a broader theme, rather than concentrating on a single issue," Mr Templeman said.

DAW 2013 will focus on all drugs including alcohol, raising awareness of the effects it and other drugs have on communities and families.

"ADCA and the Australian Government take the challenge of alcohol and other drugs misuse very seriously, and know substance misuse often has devastating flow-on effects for communities, families and individuals when left unchecked. ADCA is confident that the theme of *Drugs, Communities & Families!* will strike the right note," Mr Templeman said.

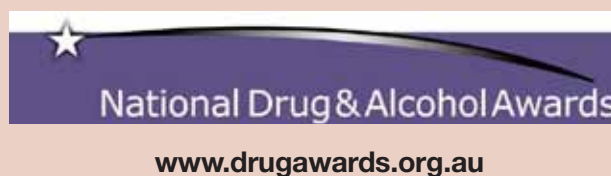
DAW 2013 supporting daily themes will include *Illicit Drugs/ Stimulants/ Inhalants, Alcohol/ Tobacco, script and non-script pharmaceuticals, Families/ Youth Issues, and Building Resilience in Communities.*

Mr Templeman said ADCA was again calling on organisations from across the AOD, health, education, community, education, police, and media sectors to get involved in DAW 2013 by registering an event at [www.drugactionweek.org.au](http://www.drugactionweek.org.au) from mid-January.

"ADCA is aiming for a new record of more than 1000 events in 2013 to surpass the 914 mark set for DAW 2012," Mr Templeman said. "There remains an urgent need to instil in the minds of all Australians the need to raise awareness around the misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and work towards solutions to improve health and wellbeing."

Mr Templeman said challenges of alcohol and illicit drugs misuse should never be underestimated, and that it was pleasing to note initiatives at all levels of Government in prevention and treatment programs to improve our national healthcare system.

**All enquiries regarding Drug Action Week 2013 and the 2013 National Drug and Alcohol Awards should be directed to Brian Flanagan, Manager National Programs, by contacting him on 02 6215 9802 (w), 0400 860 058 (m); or by email at [brian.flanagan@adca.org.au](mailto:brian.flanagan@adca.org.au)**





# Drug regulation – is the tide turning?

Waiting for ideas to gain traction in the drug and alcohol environment is a slow process, so the speed with which people around the world are embracing the notion that there needs to be a fresh approach to drug regulation comes as something of a surprise.

David Templeman mentions the Australia 21 movement elsewhere in this edition and its call for decriminalisation of certain drugs. Australia 21's sentiments are echoed on an international scale with a quantum shift of opinion in the USA and Europe, with research from the latter informing Australia's position on what many see as the futility of attempts to control illicit drugs.

Despite the expenditure of \$2.5 trillion dollars on fighting drugs over the past 40 years, there's little return on outlay, which raises the question of whether it's worth it – whether we need to change the way we think. The problem is that governments' drug policies are focusing on the supply of drugs rather than concentrating on lowering their demand: for example, in the US almost twice as much is spent on law enforcement than on drug treatment and prevention.



That's the theme so many who have been involved in the anti-drug camp are now adopting. We see this remarkable turnaround in traditional news sources, in opinion pieces, in blogs and across social media.

*Breaking the Taboo* is a new hour-long documentary featuring interviews with current and former world presidents including Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter. The film follows The Global Commission on Drug Policy on a mission to break the political taboo over the War on Drugs and expose what it calls the biggest failure of global policy in the last 40 years.



The film makes the point that illicit drugs are now the third most valuable industry in the world after food and oil. Drugs are cheaper and more available than ever before yet the illegal drugs trade is still worth \$300-400 billion a year. Millions of people are in prison for drugs offences. Corruption and violence, especially in producer and transit countries, endanger democracy. Tens of thousands of people die each year in drug wars.

*Breaking the Taboo* can be watched free of charge until 7 January. It's an hour well spent and is available on You-Tube at [breakingthetaboo.com](http://breakingthetaboo.com)

Equally interesting is the work of Brisbane-based Stuart McMillen, who backs up his writing talent with online comics. The following link will take you to an example of his work released in October 2012.

McMillen's brother Andrew also wrote a comprehensive piece on the Silk Road online drug market for Australian Penthouse earlier in the year.  
<http://andrewmcmillen.com/2012/02/07/australian-penthouse-story-the-high-road-silk-road-an-online-marketplace-like-no-other-february-2012/>

He's currently working on another project, a comic on the late 1970s Rat Park study into drug addiction by Canadian psychologist Bruce Alexander and his colleagues at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada.

**The cartoon images on this page are the copyrighted work of freelance journalist and illustrator Stuart McMillen, who has approved their use in this issue of ADCA News.**  
[http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/comics\\_en/war-on-drugs/](http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/comics_en/war-on-drugs/)



## Alcohol and drug issues top NSW Parliamentary Inquiry agenda

The New South Wales Government has approached ADCA to make submissions on issues currently under consideration by several upper house committees.

ADCA normally confines its responses to matters at a federal level, most recently lodging submissions on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) draft report on a minimum price for alcohol, on minimum standards for Alcohol Management Plans in the Northern Territory and on the development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. However, the issues the parliamentary committees are investigating may have national significance, with committee responses to submissions possibly raising implications for the broader Australian community.

A Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee is inquiring into the use of cannabis for medical purposes. The committee will examine if and how cannabis should be supplied for medical use and the legal implications and issues surrounding its use. It will consider ways to access the chemical properties of cannabis for therapeutic purposes, from smoking to manufacturing pharmaceutical products ingested through nasal sprays, tablets or other mediums.

Another committee is conducting an inquiry into drugs and alcohol treatment, looking to evaluate current policies with a particular focus on deterrence, treatment and rehabilitation. It is considering the effectiveness of current drug and alcohol policies – in particular the delivery and effectiveness of treatment services for those addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, and the impact on their families, carers and the community.

The Legislative Council's Social Issues Committee is exploring strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in New South Wales with particular emphasis on alcohol advertisements and promotions, workplaces, licensed venues and the impacts of alcohol abuse on the health system.

Chair Niall Blair says the committee is examining the effect of alcohol advertisements and promotions on young people and will consider restrictions on them.

"Binge drinking and associated anti-social behaviour among young people is a significant problem," Blair says, with young people vulnerable to the perceived social benefits of consuming alcohol as presented in advertisements and promotions. "The impacts of alcohol abuse can spread into the workplace, on roads and at public venues, which ultimately places a drain on our healthcare system."

ADCA made a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the Provision of Alcohol to Minors earlier this year, appearing before the committee in Sydney. Again, our interest was piqued due to the potential national implications and the fact that all state and territory governments seem to have their own interpretation of how to address this vexed issue.

The Australian Senate has referred a fourth inquiry to its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committees to investigate the value of the justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda described justice reinvestment to a juvenile justice seminar in Sydney in 2010 as a system where public funds that would have been spent on covering the costs of imprisonment are diverted to local communities with a high concentration of offenders. The money is invested in community programs, services and activities aimed at addressing the underlying causes of crime.

The Senate committee will consider the drivers behind the growth over the past 30 years of the Australian imprisonment rate, the economic and social costs of imprisonment and the over-representation of disadvantaged groups within Australian prisons, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those with mental health issues, cognitive disability and hearing loss.

Also on the agenda is consideration of the scope for federal government action which would encourage state and territory governments to adopt the concept.

With these four submissions in the pipeline and responses due by mid February and March, there's quite a workload ahead of us – and not as much time as one might think – so to our Working Groups and wider membership, thinking caps on please.

You'll find information on the New South Wales Parliament's Committees Pages <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/V3ListInquiries> which contains relevant details, terms of reference, timelines etc. The Justice Reinvestment inquiry can be found at [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=legcon\\_ctte/justice\\_reinvestment/info.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/justice_reinvestment/info.htm)

If you would like to contribute to any of the inquiries please do so at least two weeks before the specified closure date. Comments should go to Meredythe Crane at [Meredythe.Crane@adca.org.au](mailto:Meredythe.Crane@adca.org.au) or on 02) 6215 9808 and to Lucy Barnard at [Lucy.barnard@adca.org.au](mailto:Lucy.barnard@adca.org.au) or on 02) 6215 9814.



# Mental Health Reforms Can't Ignore AOD Capacity Building

OPINION

The first report card from Australia's National Mental Health Commission following its foundation early this year has greatly raised awareness of the incidence of mental illness in society. The reality is whether that awareness will translate into action.

The report calls for a different approach to all aspects of mental health from health, housing, education, employment, social and family support, justice and corrections. There's probably no better illustration of the need for a new approach than the response to December's tragic massacre at the elementary school in Connecticut, USA, which largely ignores the mental health issues that sparked the killing in favour of a shrill debate over the right to bear arms.

ADCA Patron Professor Ian Webster is one of the Mental Health Commissioners who compiled Australia's National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. A public health and community medicine physician, Professor Webster brings a rare mix of research and practical experience to the debate. His own work leads him to highlight the dilemma of whether to heed the daily experiences of front-line practitioners or to be informed by the averaged data that government and researchers compile, the basis of the evidence on which so much of our policy is formulated.

Professor Webster says the report card is an injunction on government to respond – to act on the issues it highlights. “We need to consider greater social determinants of mental health disorders such as alcohol and other drugs, homelessness and employment.”

Governments worldwide have been issued with the same injunction in the form of the report of *The Global Burden of Disease 2010* (GBD 2010), which labels mental health as the world's largest contributor to disability. *The Lancet* describes the report as “a critical contribution to our understanding of present and future health priorities for countries and the global community – a manifesto for global health”.

GBD 2010 is a collaborative project led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in the US and involves 302 institutions across 50 countries. This is its first report since an inaugural study published in the early 1990s. Since then, it says the burdens of major depression and anxiety have each increased by 37 per cent to the extent that major depressive disorders now account for 63 million years spent living with a disability.

The report attributes close to a quarter of the world's disability burden to mental and behavioural disorders, including major depressive disorder, anxiety, Alzheimer's, schizophrenia and bipolar disease. Alcohol is a major contributor – number one in Eastern Europe and number three globally. Major depressive disorder alone accounts for 8.1 per cent of the disability burden – second only to low back pain.

Australia's involvement in GBD 2010 included Professor Louisa Degenhardt of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW. Professor Degenhardt co-chaired the Expert Group on Mental Disorders and Illicit Drug Use. The results of this analysis will be published in 2013, but illicit drugs are recognised for their part in the growth of the global burden of disease over the last two decades.

UNSW Head of Psychiatry Professor Philip Mitchell who is based at the Black Dog Institute, worked on the worldwide impact of bipolar disease. He says, “This report looks at the total impact of disease over a person's life. Mental illnesses present very commonly when people are in their 20s and 30s and they often reoccur, so the lifetime disability is greater.”

In the context of the National Mental Health Commission report, ADCA has raised concerns that massive cuts to service delivery in Queensland, and similar actions likely in NSW with outsourcing of key public services, will run counter to the necessary reforms. The ill-informed Northern Territory approach to establish rehabilitation or prison farms for habitual drunks combined with a reduction in services will be a major impediment to improving the community's mental health.

On the street, the urgency of the call to action is even stronger. Odyssey House's latest annual report reveals that 56 per cent of its clients seeking treatment for alcohol and other drug dependence have mental health problems – up a third from the previous year and five times higher than 13 years ago.

ADCA believes these are critical issues that warrant immediate consideration – in particular additional resourcing for the AOD sector – by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). COAG has to act on the Commission's report card and on GBD 2010, to urge a more responsible, comprehensive and multi-sector approach to these issues by the Commonwealth, states and territories. Governments must recognise that failure to do so will lead to burgeoning community problems in social and emotional well-being.





## NDSIS Update



Jane Shelling, Manager  
National Drugs Sector  
Information Service

Best Wishes for the holidays to all ADCA members from the NDSIS team. We look forward to working with you in 2013!  
*Jane Shelling Manager*

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### Have you checked the Drug database?

The Drug database lists over 94,000 alcohol and drug related resources, all housed at ADCA's Canberra headquarters. This collection is the largest of its kind in the world. Searching the Drug database is free [www.drug.org.au](http://www.drug.org.au) and NDSIS can supply full text items on demand. There are many advantages to searching Drug as an adjunct to a literature search of other commonly used databases such as PubMed, PsycInfo or CINAHL. Here are some very good reasons to search Drug.

- Free access
- Easy to use
- All items listed are available in full text
- All items are related to AOD (also comorbidity, homelessness, gambling and other similar topics)
- All main stream international AOD journals are indexed.
- Reports, discussion papers, policies and other grey literature are included.
- Drug contains material on the health, social and economic aspects of substance misuse
- Drug displays AOD serial contents pages
- Items from Drug can be downloaded into Endnote
- There are two collections within Drug for easy searching –one on aspects of inhalants and the other on workforce development

# Darwin “grog summit” lays it on the line

**November's Grog Summit in Darwin, organised by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT, delivered strong messages to governments – both Federal and Territory.**

The summit called on all levels of government to heed warnings about the risks of allowing more alcohol into remote communities. Highlighting the NT's unacceptably high rates of alcohol related harm, speakers noted NT Aboriginal people's long history of fighting for alcohol restrictions and called for acknowledgment that the situation had now reached a critical point.

ADCA used the summit communiqué to address issues arising from the Australian Government's intention to introduce minimum standards for Alcohol Management Plans (AMP) in communities prescribed under Stronger Futures legislation, the successor to the NT Emergency Response. ADCA lodged a submission on standards with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, agreeing with the concept of AMPs but stressing that they could apply nationwide and should not be exclusive to Indigenous communities.

Priscilla Collins, CEO of the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency told the summit that it was hoped AMPs would provide a mechanism for communities to regain ownership of measures to tackle alcohol. Collins stressed that the “ultimate decision over managing alcohol on our communities must lie with our people – all of us and that, in developing AMPs it was important that all the evidence be available and understandable in order to reach fully informed decisions”.

ADCA CEO David Templeman spoke at the meeting, outlining the stance of the National Alliance for Alcohol Action on the need for reform of the alcohol taxation regime. Mr Templeman spoke also of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency draft report on the establishment of an alcohol floor price,

which noted that many responses addressed the issue of alcohol taxation alongside the question of a floor price.

Mr Templeman expressed misgivings over the NT Government's approach to alcohol, saying it seemed to be coming at the problem from the other direction, intending to punish people who get on the grog, rather than tackling the easy access to cheap alcohol.

“If the reports are correct, the Territory Government wants to spend tens of millions on rehab centres to get problem drinkers back on the rails. And we all know those places will be filled with Aboriginal people. Problem drinkers are problem drinkers – regardless of their colour.

“Make no mistake ... this does not just affect blacks. In less than a couple of hours, the bars in Mitchell Street in town will be overflowing as Friday night in Darwin gets into swing,” Mr Templeman said.

ADCA says it welcomed the NT Minister for Alcohol Policy Dave Tollner's recent assertion that the government was looking to treat problem drinkers as a public health rather than criminal issue. Tollner has been reported as saying that people frequently taken into protective custody would be treated as patients and referred for treatment by a tribunal.

Aboriginal Peak Organisations in the Territory have been actively lobbying locally and nationally since the summit, one of their main levers being the report by the former NT Coordinator General for Remote Services Olga Havnen into the Northern Territory intervention. Havnen, who was sacked by the NT Government in October, reported the need for the urgent redirection of funds from bureaucracies to Aboriginal community controlled organisations. She said that Aboriginal women turned up at hospital at 69 times the rate for non-Aboriginal women – indicating that action on the main catalyst for the intervention, the protection of women from violence, was lacking.

Havnen's lengthy report is available at:  
<http://www.apont.org.au/index.php/nt-coordinator-general-for-remote-services-report-.html>



**June Oscar, CEO Marninwarntikura Womens Resource Centre (Fitzroy Crossing), Patrick Davies, Fitzroy Crossing Men's Shed and Emily Carter, Marninwarntikura Womens Resource Centre. The Women's Resource Centre has received national acclaim for its work to counter violence against women and awareness of alcohol related issues including Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.**





**Re-elected Directors:** Associate Professor Lynne Magor-Blatch, Executive Officer of the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association and Dr Stefan Gruenert, CEO of Odyssey House in Victoria.



**Newly elected Directors:** Jill Rundle, CEO of the Western Australia Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, Perth and Jeannie Little OAM, Chair of ADCA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group, from Cairns.



**Peak personalities:** ADCA board member Carrie Fowlie from the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association (ACT), Rebecca McBean from the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies and Jann Smith, CEO, Tasmanian Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Council.



**Jane Shelling, Manager of the National Drug Sector Information Service (NDSIS) and Chair of the NDSIS Advisory Committee, David McDonald.**

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**Editor:** Rob Gill, Strategic Communications and Policy Officer, [rob.gill@adca.org.au](mailto:rob.gill@adca.org.au)

**Design:** Kylie Smith Design, [www.kyliesmith.com.au](http://www.kyliesmith.com.au)

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**ADCA office contact details:**

PO Box 269 Woden ACT 2606

1st Floor 17 Napier Close Deakin ACT 2600

Tel: 02 6215 9800 Fax: 02 6281 0995

Email: [adca@adca.org.au](mailto:adca@adca.org.au) Web: [www.adca.org.au](http://www.adca.org.au)