



# TURNING POINT 2021

TREATMENT • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

# 2021 SNAPSHOT



Trained over  
**1,000**  
students



and more than  
**1,250**  
community and family  
members across Australia



More than  
**1,500**  
attendees  
to webinar and online  
presentations throughout the year



Our websites recorded  
**2,317,677**  
page views



**92%**  
indicated  
“high” or “very high”  
satisfaction with  
our training



Provided care for  
more than  
**2,700**  
people  
face-to-face



Worked on  
more than  
**50**  
research  
projects



Over  
**102,000**  
contacts  
to our telephone and online  
support services

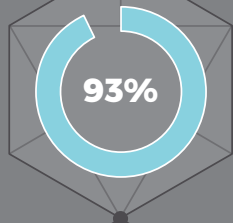


Provided care for  
more than  
**11,000**  
via telehealth

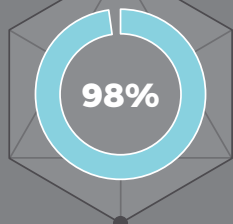
## Turning Point Outcome Monitoring Client Feedback



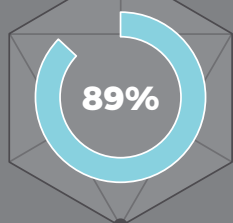
Agreed their needs were met by the service they received



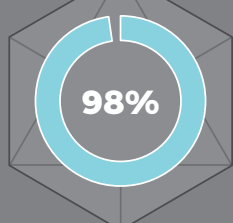
Were satisfied with the service they received



Would return to the service if they needed help in the future



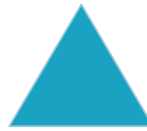
Felt they were involved in making decisions about their treatment



Felt respected by the healthcare professionals at the service

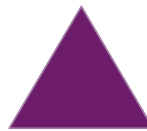
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# WELCOME



**Paul Leyden**  
Acting Executive Director,  
Clinical Operations  
(Surgery, Women and Children  
and Acute Specialist Clinics,  
Mental Health,  
Medical Imaging and  
Statewide Services)

## Eastern Health

Welcome to Turning Point 2021, our annual publication recognising the many achievements and progress in the specialty field of alcohol, drug and gambling addiction. Over the past 12 months, within the continuing challenges of COVID-19, there have been many significant achievements for Turning Point.

As a highly-valued part of Eastern Health, Turning Point has continued to deliver outstanding and innovative research, education and treatment services; proving yet again why Turning Point is recognised as a state and national leader in the addiction space.

Following the incredibly successful broadcast of SBS television series *Addicted Australia* in late 2020, we are very proud to support the Rethink Addiction campaign. This groundbreaking campaign calls for a national action plan for addiction treatment and a call for change to Australia's attitude and response to addiction.

We look forward with anticipation to the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the role that Turning Point can play in representing the populations that they work with.

In the context of the pandemic, the need for treatment support in relation



**David Plunkett**  
Chief Executive  
Eastern Health

to addiction is greater than ever before. Turning Point continues to provide great care to consumers, whether this be through the residential withdrawal and clinical outpatient services or the wide range of telephone and online support services offered across Australia.

Throughout this demanding time, there has been a continued focus on service improvement and listening to consumer needs. We commend staff, consumers and those with lived experience for your unwavering dedication to innovation and the provision of high quality treatment services.

The research work that Turning Point has undertaken in the last year continues to push national and international boundaries to challenge practice and inform policy direction.

There have been a broad range of studies undertaken that span participation in clinical trials for new pharmacotherapy approaches and the analysis of ambulance data across Australia and the use of telehealth during the pandemic.

Turning Point has continued to adjust its approach and build capacity for the provision of great learning experiences.

This includes sustaining and enhancing the online delivery of training across many settings and student groups.

The Masters course in Addictive Behaviours has gone from strength to strength and family focused programs such as *BreakThrough* have helped more people across Victoria than ever before navigate their way through the difficulties of supporting loved ones experiencing addiction.

On behalf of Eastern Health and the community, we wish to congratulate Turning Point staff on their exceptional work and to all the collaborators, consumers and carers who partner with Turning Point in the delivery of addiction treatment and the quest for groundbreaking research – thank you.

*“Turning Point, together with Eastern Health and Monash University, continue to push the boundaries of innovative addiction-related research, clinical care, and education that translates to improved outcomes for patients, families and communities.”*

## Monash University

Addiction is a chronic yet misunderstood health condition. It affects people from all walks of life and is a major contributor to the burden of disease in Australia. In order to change this we must work together.

Monash University is proud of its ongoing partnership with Turning Point and Eastern Health - a partnership that spans many years and one that demonstrates the collective purpose we all share in seeking to understand the complex challenges caused by addiction to alcohol, other drugs and gambling.

The importance of combining expertise in clinical services, academic research and education to address these challenges cannot be underestimated. Only through collaboration can we work effectively to provide solutions and deliver world-class outcomes for the wider community.

Turning Point is a leader in the field of addiction. It has built a national and international reputation for excellence in research, clinical care and education,

and has contributed significantly to areas of public policy to improve the lives of those living with addiction.

In conjunction with the Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC), Turning Point continues to conduct innovative research centred on evidence-based approaches that minimise the harms associated with addiction and optimise health and wellbeing.

Monash University is delighted to continue its work with Turning Point to deliver a suite of Addictive Behaviours programs at Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Master's level to enable the development of specialist knowledge and skills, and to meet the growing demands of the healthcare sector.

Understanding the challenges and providing solutions to alcohol, other drugs and gambling requires a whole community approach.

Turning Point, together with Eastern Health and Monash University, continue to push the boundaries of innovative addiction-related research, clinical care, and education that translates to improved outcomes for patients, families and communities.

Monash University congratulates Turning Point on its achievements and enduring commitment to improving societal responses to addiction, and looks forward to supporting its continued growth and success.

**Prof Christina Mitchell AO**  
Dean of Medicine,  
Nursing and  
Health Sciences,  
Monash University



**Prof Ian Davis**  
Professor of Medicine,  
Monash University  
and Eastern Health,  
Head, Eastern Health  
Clinical School



# INTRODUCTION

The past year has brought enormous challenges for us all, which makes the 2021 Annual Report all the more remarkable in terms of the extraordinary achievements that our incredible staff have accomplished.

Despite having to continually adapt to changing rules and regulations, we have continued to provide high quality care for our clients, as well as highly valued research and education programs. Our staff have continued to deliver amazing outcomes, whilst also juggling the many demands and stresses that responding to the pandemic has brought to our own private lives, families and communities.

We were extremely proud to be involved in the SBS documentary *Addicted Australia*, which aired at the end of 2020, and to hear the positive impact it had on so many Australians. The series provided viewers with a deeper understanding of addiction, the devastating impact it has on individuals and families, and what effective treatment and recovery looks like when people have access to a holistic model of care.

The hope is that this series will help change community perceptions about the reality of addiction, elevate expectations about what treatment should look like, and alter the narrative such that recovery is not just a possibility, but like other health conditions, is a realistic goal.

The series served as a 'call to arms' and we were encouraged to build on the remarkable support for the documentary in launching the *Rethink Addiction* national campaign, supported by more than 50 organisational partners. The campaign calls for a national action plan for addiction treatment and advocates for a change to Australia's attitude and response to addiction.

The campaign seeks to amplify the real stories of addiction and encourages everyone to share their experiences and messages of hope. The campaign was delighted to partner with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation to run a highly successful webinar and in May, a sold-out event at Federation Square delivered an engaging panel discussion and the announcement of a national convention in Canberra.

There have been multiple public inquiries over the past 12 months and we recognise these are key opportunities to influence public policy around alcohol, drugs and gambling.

The Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence in Victoria has accomplished much more than unearth operational concerns and has

highlighted the significant impact of gambling harms on the community.

Turning Point was delighted to present to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and we are committed to supporting the implementation of key recommendations to ensure Victorians receive optimal care wherever they present for treatment.

Our treatment services continue to seek new ways to improve the support they provide to Victorians and their families. One example of this work is the development of a *Recovery Passport* for people who use our inpatient services. The resource was guided by input from a broad range of stakeholders including clients, consumer advocates and clinicians.

As part of increasing the capacity and expertise of our clinical teams, we were pleased to be able to establish three new Nurse Practitioner Candidate roles.

With increasing community need as a result of the pandemic, we were able to refresh the *Counselling Online* national website, incorporate new

**“The work that we do would not be possible without the support we receive from a broad range of partners and collaborators and our incredibly dedicated team...”**

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support tools, increase promotion to the broad suite of support options available, as well as welcome new forum moderators.

This work delivered some incredible outcomes, including increasing web traffic by over 44% and increased engagement in forum discussions.

Research activity continued at a rapid pace. This included participation in multiple clinical trials including long-acting injectable buprenorphine for opiate dependence, e-cigarettes for smoking cessation and a health promotion alcohol intervention in BreastScreen services.

This year also saw a refresh and relaunch of the *AODstats* website, providing ready access to key Victorian data on harms related to alcohol, illicit and pharmaceutical drug use to policymakers, researchers and service providers.

Other research included work focusing on the use of telehealth during the pandemic and testing the effectiveness of *Ready2Change*, a multisession telephone-delivered intervention for alcohol and other drug problems.



**Anthony Denham**  
Program Director  
Statewide Services  
Eastern Health

**Prof Dan Lubman AM**  
Executive Clinical Director  
Turning Point  
Eastern Health  
Chair of Addiction Studies  
Monash University



Research also focused on examining the effect of common drugs on sleep; young people’s experiences of drinking on a night out; and the use of ambulance data to better understand the impact of alcohol outlet density on family violence, highlighting what a successful year it has been.

The same can also be said for work in the education domain. Turning Point continued to offer an extensive range of webinars and courses to support best practice for health professionals and educators.

Attendance at Turning Point webinars in 2021 reached record numbers. *BreakThrough*, a program run in partnership with SHARC, to support families impacted by alcohol and drug use, has transitioned seamlessly to online delivery.

Our Masters course in Addictive Behaviours continued to grow, while

internships and placements, including a successful partnership with the Monash University Social Work department, continued in a revised but very successful format.

The work that we do would not be possible without the support we receive from a broad range of partners and collaborators and our incredibly dedicated team who continually go above and beyond to deliver the breadth and quality of our work.

Thank you once again for all that has been achieved in 2021 toward transforming and leading change for people affected by addiction.

# FEEDBACK



*"I really like Turning Point, my counsellor is really lovely. The first time I used a counselling program I went cold turkey, experienced really bad withdrawal symptoms and relapsed. However, this time with Turning Point, I'm taking a much slower process and learning skills to prevent relapse, it's very good."*



*"I've done a few private and public detox and rehabs before. The Turning Point staff were unbelievable, and the food was fine. The nurses were fantastic, not just with me; they were so helpful to everyone that I could see."*



*"My counsellor, is just fantastic... I haven't opened up to a counsellor ever before, but she makes me feel really comfortable to talk. A huge thank you to her!"*



*"I liked the way they looked after me, and even my chronic back pain, everyone was brilliant."*



*"I actually came to (Turning Point's Box Hill Hospital ward) 1 East because I watched the SBS documentary Addicted Australia, and it looked really professional. It really helped me with what to expect from detox."*



*"I just wanted to say a massive thank you. My partner struggles with addiction and it's been one of the most challenging things I've had to deal with and your support has been so valuable for me. I wish I could remember the name of who I spoke to today, having an empathetic ear and some guidance helped me so much. I'm so appreciative of the work you do; you make the world a kinder place, thank you!"*



*"My counselling was client and person centred, with collaborative relationships. My counsellor would invite me to share my opinion, not just tell me what do to. It was non-judgemental."*



*"Online meetings have opened up so many different avenues for us that we never thought possible, especially for people in remote areas and for people who are new to the meetings. It allows them to keep themselves private as it's all very raw at the beginning."*



*"It is so nice to speak to and hear from others who are in a similar situation. I find friends and family sometimes don't really understand which is frustrating especially during those times when I feel like I am trying to deal with my loved one on my own. They mean well but they don't really understand addiction which can be quite hurtful."*



# SENIOR STAFF



**Prof Dan Lubman AM**  
Executive Clinical Director



**Anthony Denham**  
Program Director  
Statewide Services

## Research and Education



**A/Prof Victoria Manning**  
Head of Research and  
Workforce Development



**Dr Kieran Connolly**  
Associate Program Director



**Megan Berry**  
Head of Policy and  
Strategic Communication

**Fay Staios**  
Strategic Lead Workforce  
Development

**Dr Debbie Scott**  
Strategic Lead National  
Addiction and Mental  
Health Surveillance Unit

**Dr Michael Savic**  
Strategic Lead Clinical and  
Social Research

## Treatment Services



**Karyn Cook**  
Associate Program Director



**Dr Matthew Frei**  
Clinical Director



**Dr Shalini Arunogiri**  
Deputy Clinical Director

**Rick Loos**  
Manager  
Turning Point Telephone  
and Online Services

**Jonathan Tyler**  
Manager  
Specialist Clinical  
Services

**Orson Rapose**  
Systems Manager

**Teddy Sikhali**  
Service Manager  
Eastern Treatment  
Services

**Alex Lebani**  
Nurse Unit Manager  
Wellington House

**Jo Wasley**  
Nurse Unit Manager  
1 East

**Carmen Harris**  
Associate Director  
Service Development  
and Business Support

# ADDICTED AUSTRALIA

Rethink Addiction is a coalition of organisations advocating for a change to Australia's attitude and response to addiction. The national campaign began in the months leading up to the airing of *Addicted Australia*, an ideal springboard to tell the real stories of addiction.

Turning Point's Executive Clinical Director Professor Dan Lubman said: "Addiction continues to be one of the most stigmatised health conditions globally, and there are many myths and misconceptions in the community about what addiction is and what help is available."

"We were delighted to take part in the documentary to highlight the reality of addiction, the devastating effect it has on individuals and families, and what effective treatment and recovery looks like when people have access to a holistic model of care."

The six-month wraparound out-patient program offered as part of the series included access to medical and psychological treatment, peer and family support, as well as inpatient care, giving clients the best possible chance of recovery.

*"We were delighted to take part in the documentary to highlight the reality of addiction, the devastating effect it has on individuals and families, and what effective treatment and recovery looks like when people have access to a holistic model of care."*

– Professor Dan Lubman

The four-part, one-hour documentary series aired on SBS in November 2020, with filming capturing the participants navigating Victoria's lengthy lockdown. In-depth interviews with Turning Point staff provided a unique opportunity to highlight the groundbreaking work that Turning Point does.

The series was highly acclaimed, resulting in almost 300 pieces of content produced across TV, radio and print media, including podcasts, magazines and national outlets.

The series is an important vehicle for showcasing the critical work that addiction services such as

Turning Point play in supporting the significant number of Australians struggling with addiction.

The hope is that this series will help change community perceptions about the reality of addiction, elevate expectations about what treatment should look like and alter the narrative such that recovery is not just a possibility but, like for other health conditions, is a realistic goal.

If you have not yet seen the series, all four episodes are available on SBS On Demand and please tell your friends and colleagues to watch it too.



# RETHINK ADDICTION

The campaign has been successful in building a coalition of sector partners who are united by the simple notion that we need to change the conversation about addiction. An initial focus was on calling out the stigma and shame that prevents people from seeking help, by sharing real stories, and encouraging everyone to watch *Addicted Australia*.

The series and the campaign garnered the attention of decision makers and regularly trended on social media throughout the airing of the four-part documentary. At the conclusion of the series, Rethink Addiction had gathered over 50 high profile partners, a dedicated public supporter base and a clear indication that the conversation should continue beyond the airing of the documentary series.

In December 2020, a joint webinar was organised with one of our partners, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), which had over 400 registrations and provided a closer look at nursing perspectives around addiction. The event was a fantastic way to finish the year and a further indication that Rethink Addiction has great potential.

In May 2021, the campaign hosted its first in-person event at Federation Square in Melbourne. The sell-out event centred on a fascinating panel discussion around the making and impact of *Addicted Australia*. AFL star Dayne Beams reflected on his own experience with addiction, the support he received and what his life looks like now.

Addicted Australia producer Jacob Hickey provided his insights on why he made the series and what he had learnt along the way.

Shanna Whan shared her lived experience with alcohol in the bush and setting up Sober in the Country. Turning Point's Executive Clinical Director Prof Dan Lubman discussed the challenges in making the series and the treatment and support everyone should receive to support their recovery.

The campaign has continued to grow and garner support from a widening group of stakeholders. There have been opportunities to elevate the discussion further and following contact with the Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP and the Australian Department of Health, the campaign received support for a National Convention in Canberra to facilitate a discussion of addiction issues.

Work has begun, working closely with key partners and stakeholders, to set the program for the Convention. The event was originally planned for the latter part of 2021, however due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic; it has been rescheduled to 2022.

Program Director for Turning Point Anthony Denham said: "The substantial support we have gained for this campaign in such a short time really speaks to where we are in the conversation about addiction.



With supporters spanning the health sector as well as the general public, there is clearly a huge appetite to reduce the shame and stigma associated with addiction to change the conversation.

There is also a huge commitment to improving the outcomes for people affected by addiction, both at an individual level as well as at a community level. I look forward to seeing how the campaign grows in the coming year and encourage anyone reading this to join us. There are lots of different ways to get involved."

 To find out more and get involved visit: [www.rethinkaddiction.org.au](http://www.rethinkaddiction.org.au)

# INFLUENCING POLICY

In the last 12 months, Turning Point has made many submissions and representations to help inform and influence policy. This included submissions to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence in Victoria; the Inquiry into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria; and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

## Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence

### Shining light on gambling harms

The Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence in Victoria has presented an enormous opportunity to shed light on gambling harms in identifying the many wrongdoings of Crown Melbourne.

Every day, an Australian struggling with their gambling dies by suicide. Inadequate statutory obligations, weak regulatory oversight and a lack of services for people with gambling addiction, all contribute to this horrifying statistic.

The system is broken and in need of urgent reform.

The onus is wrongly placed on vulnerable people with gambling addiction to do what their condition prevents them from doing; and

'gamble responsibly'. How does one 'gamble responsibly'? The onus should instead be placed on gambling operators that at best, are failing to support and, at worst, are exploiting vulnerable people living with addiction.

In May 2021, Turning Point and the Monash Addiction Research Centre made a joint submission to the Royal Commission.

Among its many recommendations were calls to cap the number of machines in areas of socio-economic disadvantage; development of a quality and outcomes framework and optimal care pathways for gambling disorders; and implement a campaign that tackles stigma and normalises help-seeking for gambling addiction.

### Cannabis use in Victoria

In April 2021, Professor Dan Lubman AM and Dr Christine Grove, Senior Lecturer, Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education, Monash University presented the Turning Point and Monash Addiction Research Centre's joint submission to the Inquiry into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria.

At a public hearing of the Victorian Parliament's Legal and Social Issues Committee, Professor Lubman and Dr Grove detailed how the submission's recommendations would help improve health outcomes.



## Addiction and Mental Health

Turning Point welcomed the March release of the final report by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The final report made 65 recommendations, in addition to nine recommendations from the interim report, to transform the way mental health services in Victoria are delivered and improve the mental health of people in the state.

Key recommendations include the need for all mental health and wellbeing services to provide integrated care, as well as the establishment of a new statewide service, for people living with mental

illness and addiction. Underscoring the demand for integrated services is the fact that one third of people living with addiction have at least one co-occurring mental illness, with 70–90% of those already in treatment for substance use disorders experiencing co-occurring mental health conditions.

As these important reforms are progressively implemented, Turning Point looks forward to working closely with its partners and the Victorian Government to provide better and more integrated care for people struggling with addiction across the state.

Recommendations included the need to implement public health campaigns and school-based health education programs to ensure children, young people and adults develop critical health literacy in relation to drug use and mental health, and build their help-seeking skills.

The submission also noted the negative impacts of criminalisation and emphasised the need for improved diversion programs that adopt a public health approach to cannabis use and keep people out of the criminal justice system.



# IMPROVING THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

## Recovery Passport

Turning Point harnessed input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders including clients, consumer advocates, clinicians and group facilitators to produce the *Recovery Passport*, an evidence-based recovery manual and workbook.

The *Recovery Passport* is given to clients on admission to our residential services 1 East and Wellington House, to support them in their recovery journey. It features key information on addiction and withdrawal, key psychological strategies to help reduce drug use and improve wellbeing and a Recovery Toolbox of helpful resources, including self-care choices, navigating personal relationships and guidance on effective communication and setting boundaries.

All sections are presented in easy to read non-medical language. It also has space for clients to make notes about things they need to remember to aid their recovery. One hundred and fifty copies of the first edition will be distributed for piloting after which feedback from clients, staff and carers will be incorporated into the next edition of the resource.

Dr Mclytton Clever, who led the project, said: "The workbook is a fantastic resource that provides our clients with important information, tips and helpful strategies that we explore in-depth in our group residential program. Clients can also refer to the workbook in their spare time while they are here, then take it with them and refer back to it when they are back in the community."

Turning Point would like to acknowledge the funding support of comedy duo Marty and Michael and the Australian Horizons Foundation that helped make the *Recovery Passport* possible.

***"The workbook is a fantastic resource that provides our clients with important information, tips and helpful strategies that we explore in-depth in our group residential program."***

**- Dr Mclytton Clever**



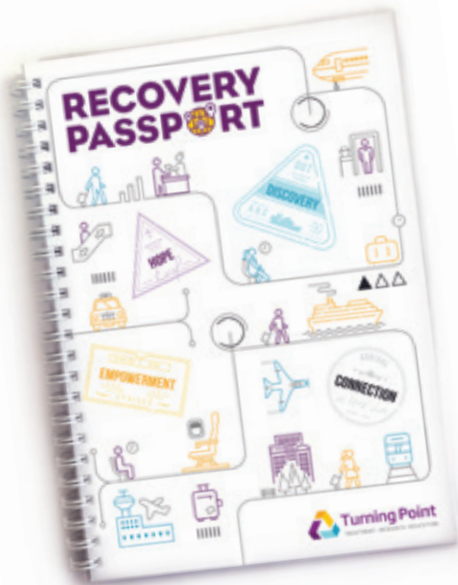
## Listening to feedback and improving our services

At Turning Point, we recognise that feedback is a powerful tool in helping us to maximise what we can offer clients in supporting them on their recovery journey. Feedback is critical to understanding how clients experience our services, and provides key information in how we can improve the way we deliver care.

One example this year was feedback around the need to increase the number of activities available at our short-stay rehab Wellington House outside of the scheduled day program. A guitar, karaoke machine, treadmill and exercise bikes were subsequently purchased and have been a big hit with clients. The BBQ area was also upgraded.

While individually these can appear to be small things, they all add up to an improved experience of being at Wellington House and, importantly, were driven by client feedback.

Teddy Sikhali, Manager of Turning Point Eastern Treatment Services noted: "In addition to the upgrades and equipment added to our facility, based on client feedback, we've been able to add a dietician to cook with our clients, teaching them colourful ways to prepare healthy food. We've also added an exercise physiologist to our residential program and we've definitely seen improvements in our clients' physical health as a result."





**LEFT:** From L to R: Alex Lebani (Nurse Unit Manager), Prof Dan Lubman (Executive Clinical Director), Ms Sonya Terpstra (Labor Member for Eastern Metropolitan Region) and A/Prof David Plunkett (Eastern Health CEO).

**BOTTOM:** Fiona O'Loughlin with Nicolle Tilley, Registered Nurse at Wellington House.

## Visitors

In the earlier part of the year when we had minimal or no COVID-19 in the community, Wellington House and 1 East had the pleasure of welcoming Labour Member for the Eastern Metropolitan Region, Ms Sonya Terpstra, who visited to learn more about Turning Point's 28-day withdrawal and stabilisation program.

During the tour, Ms Terpstra spoke to staff and clients and sought to better understand addiction treatment and how service delivery could be improved.

The service also enjoyed a visit by well-known stand-up comedian, accomplished writer, TV presenter and media personality Fiona O'Loughlin. Fiona is an ambassador for the *Rethink Addiction* campaign. Fiona shared her own lived experience with clients and staff and gave messages of support.



### Residential Withdrawal Orientation Videos

Anxiety prior to admission for withdrawal can be a significant barrier to successful treatment. For our clients, residential withdrawal means leaving their home, their caregivers and an interruption of their daily activities and routines.

As part of allaying our clients' fears and preparing them for their admission, orientation videos were developed to give clients an introduction to Turning Point's inpatient services, how our therapeutic programs work and what clients can expect upon admission.

They are recorded in an easy-to-digest format, are mobile device friendly and can be shared with friends and family. An SMS with a link to the videos is sent before admission for clients to watch.

This year, a survey was conducted to measure how helpful the videos were to the clients. Seventy five per cent of prospective clients had watched the videos prior to admission and rated them an average of 8 out of 10 for usefulness. Some of them commented:



*"They were fantastic!  
There was one for me and  
another for my family;  
I sent them to my friends  
and family. So helpful, made  
me feel less nervous about  
going to detox."*



*"I had never been to  
rehab so it answered questions  
about what was involved  
and gave me an idea of the  
difference between 1 East  
and Wellington House."*



*"So great, brilliant!  
It really cleared up my  
expectations of the place, which  
was so helpful because  
I have never experienced  
a detox before."*





# NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Consistent with an ethos of ongoing training and clinical excellence, Turning Point created three new Nurse Practitioner Candidate roles this year. The positions will support Turning Point's Specialist Pharmacotherapy Services at Richmond and Box Hill.

Nurse Practitioners are registered nurses who have acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded and extended nursing practice.

Upon completion of training, Nurse Practitioners are qualified to diagnose and treat certain health conditions, order and interpret blood and radiology tests, and prescribe medications.

## Nurse Practitioner Profiles



### Sarah Berryman

I have worked with Turning Point for four years and I still love it! I have a background in mental health, across adolescent and adult inpatient and community case management. I chose to become a Nurse Practitioner for the opportunity to expand my skills, challenge myself and provide greater pharmacotherapy services to our clients.



### Temika Mu

I have now been at Turning Point for more than two and a half years. Nurse Practitioners play an important role in alcohol and other drug service delivery and it is incredibly exciting to have Turning Point supporting its first Nurse Practitioners within the field. My ultimate hope is to improve the client experience and journey through the treatment system. I am currently involved in developing a nurse-practitioner led model of care to improve accessibility to long-acting injectable buprenorphine across Victoria.



### Michelle Sharkey

I've worked in the addiction field for over 30 years and have been with Turning Point since 2008. Becoming a Nurse Practitioner offers me the opportunity to bring together my experience and clinical nursing skills at a specialised and advanced level. I'm excited to then be able to apply these in the drug and alcohol sector, and add to the suite of services our wonderful clinic team provides. I hope that by taking this path at a later stage of my career I can inspire other nurses out there working in addiction that becoming a Nurse Practitioner is a feasible option, and it's never too late! I hope to be able to support some along the journey when I'm qualified.

# ENHANCING ONLINE COUNSELLING

**Counsellingonline.org.au** has been operated by Turning Point since 2006. Additional funding in 2020-21 provided an opportunity to make some significant improvements and increase the reach of the service. A comprehensive approach was undertaken to improve awareness, visibility, access and enhance engagement and connection. This has led to some positive outcomes, including increasing Counselling Online's Australian web traffic by over 44% and having its posts seen over 1.1 million times on Facebook.

## Branding, Content and Website Refresh

It had been several years since Counselling Online's brand had been reviewed. The vision was to modernise the brand, while at the same time aligning it more closely with Turning Point, to leverage off its awareness in the general community.

The team also remapped the website to improve navigation and rewrote a considerable amount of the website content to make it easier to read for a help-seeking audience. To further support the user journey, new technical functionality was added, including

an interactive chatbot that supports clients to rapidly navigate the site and answer queries and an updated SMS messaging tool that provides support and encouragement to clients.

A series of FAQ blogs was developed to help answer questions that clients regularly ask. Some of this year's blogs included, 'You've got this: 10 tips to overcome nerves about seeing a counsellor about alcohol or drugs' and 'A time for rest: 7 tips to give yourself a break this Christmas.'

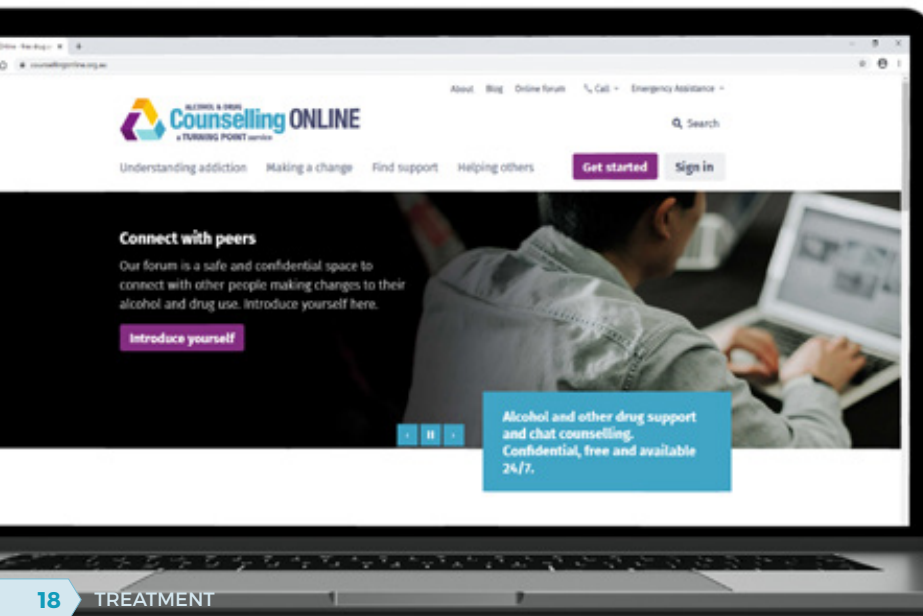
The team have also developed a series of counsellor and peer worker profiles to help demystify the service and encourage help seekers to make contact.

Service activity statistics indicate that this work has been well received and, in conjunction with additional funding for advertising, we have been able to dramatically increase web traffic to the website and peer forum.

"The enhanced Counselling Online service is better placed than ever to connect to and support members of the community seeking help. The website and service developments have helped treatment seekers experience easier navigation, increased options for support and a clearer pathway to change and recovery." Darryl Jones, Shift Supervisor Turning Point Telephone and Online Services.

*"The website and service developments have helped treatment seekers experience easier navigation, increased options for support and a clearer pathway to change and recovery."*

- Darryl Jones



## Building a Community



### The Counselling Online Forum

is a free and confidential space where people affected by alcohol and other drugs can connect with others and chat about their experiences. Resourcing for the program was increased by adding a team of community builders, including peer support workers. The result has been a 70% increase in the number of people who have joined the forum, as well as the number of topics and interactions that have occurred.

**2,935** **2,023**

( $\uparrow$ 70.24%)

( $\uparrow$ 291%)

**Forum Members**

**Posts on the Forum**



### The Counselling Online Facebook page

is dedicated to increasing visibility of the service and helping people who are in the early stages of making a change. To increase followers, reach and engagements, extensive advertising campaigns were run that led to a significant increase in activity. Followers nearly tripled and 'reach' doubled as a result of the campaign.

**4,022** **36,518**

( $\uparrow$ 170%)

( $\uparrow$ 57%)

**Facebook followers**

**Facebook engagements**

**1,173,039**

( $\uparrow$ 94%)

**Facebook reach**

## 'Time to cut down?'

With some indications that people are drinking more during the pandemic, additional funding allowed Turning Point to run a proactive campaign to prompt people to think about their drinking habits. The campaign featured in mainstream media outlets and linked in to cross promotion on Counselling Online's social media platforms.

The campaign featured disruptive images of alcohol, with the overlay text 'Time to cut down?'. Three separate image sets were used featuring wine or beer to entice different audiences and demographics. The campaign linked to Counselling Online's short two-minute alcohol self-assessment questionnaire.

Based on the answers submitted, the person's level of risk was assessed and they were provided with helpful responses to support them in making a healthy change.

The campaign period saw nearly 9,000 people complete the self-assessment, a 118% increase compared to the previous year. The campaign was able to reach people who were not yet actively seeking help and who were interested in gaining early awareness of their drinking patterns and health impact at moderate or low risk.

Importantly, the campaign also reached people who were drinking heavily and at high risk, and who only engaged with our services because of the advertisement.

"Investing in this type of public awareness campaign has a huge

potential to broaden the general community's understanding of what problematic alcohol or drug use looks like, as well as engaging people who may need help earlier and encourage them to make changes sooner.

Long term, we hope this could have a really positive impact on the healthcare system by shortening help-seeking delays, encouraging people to get support before they are in crisis and reducing the long-term health impacts that sustained alcohol and drug use can have on individuals." Carmen Harris, Associate Director Service Development & Business Support.



# GROUNDBREAKING TREATMENT OFFERS NEW BENEFITS FOR PATIENTS

In Australia, over 53,000 people receive treatment for opioid dependence each day. These figures highlight the significance of people accessing treatment for opioid dependence nationally.

Methadone and buprenorphine are effective medications used in the treatment of opioid dependence and reduce opioid-related harms. However, there is a need to attend pharmacies or clinics regularly for dosing, which can increase stigma and limit opportunities for work and travel.

Researchers from Turning Point were involved in two key Australian studies investigating the effectiveness and experiences of a new long-acting injectable form of buprenorphine.

The DEBUT study, a multi-site Australian clinical trial, found participants preferred weekly or monthly depot buprenorphine to daily oral buprenorphine, and that depot buprenorphine was associated with more positive patient-reported outcomes, including overall satisfaction with treatment, views on effectiveness and convenience of treatment, quality of life and physical health.

A follow-up qualitative study involving interviews with 30 patients led by



*“This new treatment option was experienced as a positive for many participants, freeing them up to work, study and travel, and reducing the level of stigma they had previously experienced. However, we need to make sure that those who need additional support are not disadvantaged.”*

**– Dr Shalini Arunogiri**

Turning Point researchers found that long-acting injectable buprenorphine afforded benefits for many patients. These included opportunities to avoid stigma experienced at pharmacies or clinics by not having to dose daily; time to engage in other activities (such as travel, work, study or caregiving) by releasing participants from previous strict treatment regimens; and cost savings by not having to pay pharmacy fees associated with daily dosing.

However, for some patients who were particularly marginalised, moving to long-acting injectable buprenorphine

disrupted engagements with important social and practical supports available at pharmacies or clinics.

Deputy Clinical Director Dr Shalini Arunogiri who led the Turning Point arm of the DEBUT study said: “This new treatment option was experienced as a positive for many participants, freeing them up to work, study and travel, and reducing the level of stigma they had previously experienced. However, we need to make sure that those who need additional support are not disadvantaged.”

# AODstats RELAUNCH

Turning Point has recently updated and relaunched its highly popular AODStats website. **AODStats.org.au** is a key public resource that provides the latest information on harms related to alcohol, illicit and pharmaceutical drug use in Victoria.

This site, funded by the Victorian Department of Health, is a key tool for state and local governments and other organisations to search for and access data on alcohol and other drug-related harms, and continues Turning Point's strong history in providing alcohol and drug surveillance data to the community.

The data and maps available on AODStats build on and update information previously provided in the annual Victorian Alcohol Statistics Series and Victorian Drug Statistics Handbooks.

Lead researcher Dr Rowan Ogeil said: "AODStats is a rich resource used across multiple research projects and groups, allowing harms related to alcohol and other drugs to be quantified and differences in regional and metro areas to be mapped."

The website was re-developed from the ground up with the new format providing more timely information and is a convenient statistical and epidemiological resource for policy planners, drug service providers, health professionals and other key stakeholders.

"AODStats provides those in local and state government with a powerful resource that maps alcohol and other drug-related harms over time, allowing them to build evidence-based goals into their yearly plans," said Associate Professor Debbie Scott, Strategic Lead of the National Addiction and Mental Health Surveillance Unit.

In conjunction with the website, a new monthly AODStats bulletin was also launched, which showcases key data insights. The inaugural bulletin gives an overview of currently available datasets and highlights future updates.



To receive our monthly AODStats bulletin, please subscribe to our mailing list by completing the online form at

[www.aodstats.org.au/contact](http://www.aodstats.org.au/contact)

*"AODStats provides those in local and state government with a powerful resource that maps alcohol and other drug-related harms over time, allowing them to build evidence-based goals into their yearly plans."*

**- Associate Professor Debbie Scott**



# EXPERIENCES OF TELEHEALTH

Although telephone and video conferencing has been around for some time, in-person consultations have always been at the centre of patient care. However, when the pandemic hit in early 2020, healthcare services needed to transition quickly to provide telehealth services to patients and clients.

The past 18 months has highlighted the important role telehealth and online counselling play in the delivery of healthcare treatment, particularly where there are barriers to help seeking, such as stigmatising attitudes, confidentiality concerns or a lack of services in rural and regional areas.

Providing telehealth services increases accessibility for vulnerable populations and provides professional help and support to those who might not otherwise have sought help.

In order to understand peoples' experiences of telehealth and how it can be improved, researchers from Turning Point surveyed and interviewed clients of various alcohol and drug services, as part of a project funded by the Victorian Department of Health.

Many participants reported that convenience and ease of access were key benefits of telehealth, and care delivered via telehealth was often experienced as empathic, which led to participants feeling comfortable and building a strong rapport with clinicians.

However, for some participants who engaged in telehealth via the telephone, in particular, the absence of physical cues made communication difficult, leading to challenges in expressing emotions and building rapport.

Dr Tony Barnett who led the study said that despite there being some challenges in the delivery of telehealth, it was still valued as an effective means of delivering care.

“Participants expressed a desire for hybrid care models in the future where they have the choice of being able to engage (flexibly) with services in-person and/or via telehealth. The more training that can be offered to treatment providers in the area of telehealth, the greater the benefits for providers and clients alike,” said Dr Barnett.

Recognising that telehealth is likely to remain a permanent part of the healthcare system well beyond the current pandemic,

Turning Point, in partnership with Monash University, has developed the Graduate Certificate of Telehealth, which aims to provide healthcare professionals with a framework for developing a safe and effective virtual practice.

Clinical Director Dr Matthew Frei said: “Having expertise and knowledge in this area will enhance practice and enable healthcare professionals to deliver safe and effective virtual healthcare to meet the future needs of consumers.”

***“The more training that can be offered to treatment providers in the area of telehealth, the greater the benefits for providers and clients alike.”***

**– Dr Tony Barnett**



# HOW COMMON DRUGS AFFECT SLEEP

We all know that an afternoon coffee can make it harder for us to get to sleep, while consuming alcohol may help us fall asleep a little quicker. But what are the effects of these psychoactive drugs, those that alter our consciousness, mood and thoughts, on our actual sleeping patterns and physical and mental health?

With one in five women reportedly getting less than six hours of sleep a night, little is known about the potential role these substances play in assessing and diagnosing sleep disorders. A recent study by researchers from Turning Point, Monash University and Eastern Health has found that consuming these drugs in high quantities can be harmful, leading to stress, burnout and an inability to function properly.

An overnight sleep study in a hospital sleep clinic involving 120 patients investigated the prevalence of commonly used psychoactive drugs including alcohol, caffeine and other medications, and the relationship between use and sleep and performance outcomes.

Caffeine was the most common drug used among patients with almost 15% consuming it in high quantities (more than four cups of coffee a day), resulting in a reduction in excessive sleepiness. While moderate caffeine intake can be beneficial in keeping us alert, regular consumption in high doses can lead to poor physical and mental health outcomes including anxiety, agitation and headaches.

Dr Rowan Ogeil, who led the study, said it provided an important snapshot of how different drugs affect sleep.

"We see this as an important reminder for people with a sleep disorder or undergoing a sleep assessment

***"Many people are led to believe that alcohol helps you sleep because it makes you feel more relaxed. However, alcohol actually has negative effects on your sleep quality and causes restless sleep, particularly in the second half of the night."***

**– Dr Rowan Ogeil**

to discuss their use of drugs and medications with their doctor and hospital staff," he said.

The study also revealed an association between patients who drank at harmful levels and an increase in reporting of near-miss motor vehicle accidents.

"Many people are led to believe that alcohol helps you sleep because it makes you feel more relaxed. However, alcohol actually has negative effects on your sleep quality and causes restless sleep, particularly in the second half of the night. This can make you less alert the next day, which affects your

coordination, judgement, and reaction time while driving," said Dr Ogeil.

Polypharmacy (the use of multiple medications) was also common among study participants, with a greater number of medications used associated with poorer sleep quality.

"Sleep is vital to our everyday functioning and mood. Any change in the time you spend sleeping, or the quality of sleep that you get, should be discussed with your doctor, including when you start any new medication," said Dr Ogeil.



# A NIGHT OUT ISN'T ONLY ABOUT ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol is a common practice on a night out for young adults. Public health researchers are often concerned about the potential health and social harms associated with drinking on a night out, and advocate for measures to reduce harms, such as restricting the availability of alcohol.

While the emphasis on alcohol and (reducing) harms is useful, it overlooks the enjoyable aspects of a night out.

Researchers from Turning Point, the Monash Addiction Research Centre and the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research at La Trobe University reviewed and analysed findings of Australian studies examining young adults' experiences of drinking on a night out.

They identified various elements that shape young adults' experiences of drinking in different ways.

The formal and informal rules about drinking, such as expectations around heavy drinking or intoxication or what is appropriate behaviour while drinking are important, as are the settings and places that people encounter on a night out.

These include homes where pre-drinking may occur, bars and clubs, streets and public spaces, and transport to and from venues.

Similarly, peers can be influential not only in encouraging drinking or harms, but also in curtailing risk, providing care and in ensuring enjoyable experiences.


Indeed, social connection and pleasure were commonly identified as desirable effects that young adults sought on a night out.

"If alcohol never acts alone, then it makes little sense to focus on, or respond to, alcohol alone," said Lead Researcher Dr Michael Savic.

To open new ways of engaging with drinking on a night out (in its complexity), public health researchers might benefit from paying closer attention to the various elements (e.g. norms about drinking, settings and places, peers, desired effects) at work in young adults drinking.

Foregrounding young adults' experiences of a night out in public health initiatives might be fruitful in ensuring that initiatives resonate with young adults.



A photograph of people at a social gathering, likely a wine tasting, holding wine glasses. The image is overlaid with a large, purple, geometric graphic consisting of several triangles and a central circle. The text is placed within one of the purple triangles.

*“If alcohol never acts alone,  
then it makes little sense  
to focus on, or respond to,  
alcohol alone.”*

- Dr Michael Savic

# ALCOHOL OUTLETS AND FAMILY-RELATED VIOLENCE

A study led by Turning Point has shown that access to alcohol sales outlets, including bottle shops, restaurants, pubs and clubs, is associated with higher numbers of ambulance attendances for family-related violence.

Using National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS) data, Ambulance Victoria attendances involving alcohol, other drugs and family violence in 694 postcodes (an area comprising nearly six million Victorians) were analysed over a two-year period from July 2016 – June 2018.

Links between the density of alcohol sales outlets in an area and violent crime are well-established, but associations between alcohol sales outlet density and family violence and intimate partner violence are relatively unclear.

Studies exploring the relationship between liquor licence density and family violence tended to use data collected from police records, which typically under-report family violence, as only a small percentage of incidents are actually reported to police.

Associate Professor Debbie Scott, who led the study said: “Our research not only confirmed the role of off-premises alcohol outlets, but also demonstrated the importance of on-premises licenses in relation to family violence-related ambulance attendances.”

According to Associate Professor Scott, the findings of this study highlight the need for public health interventions and policies to reduce alcohol-related harm, suggesting that reviewing alcohol licensing policies and town planning changes would contribute to reducing family violence by restricting alcohol availability.

“This is important across all suburbs, but the data showed it was particularly important in socially disadvantaged suburbs where there is evidence of an even stronger association between family violence and alcohol availability,” said Associate Professor Scott.



***“Our research not only confirmed the role of off-premises alcohol outlets, but also demonstrated the importance of on-premises licenses in relation to family violence-related ambulance attendances.”***

**– Associate Professor Debbie Scott**

# BRAIN-TRAINING APP HELPING REDUCE ALCOHOL USE

During COVID-19 lockdowns there were reported increases in alcohol use, at a time when access to treatment and support was more restricted than ever. During this time, Turning Point researchers developed and pilot tested “SWiPE”, a widely accessible, scalable and novel brain-training app.

SWiPE aims to reduce the ‘autopilot’ response to alcohol cues, (sights, sounds and smells that are associated with alcohol) that drive impulses to drink. It delivers an evidence-based, cognitive training intervention called ‘Cognitive Bias Modification’.

This training requires people to practice repeatedly swiping away (*avoiding*) images of their usual alcoholic beverage and swiping towards themselves (*approaching*) photos of friends, family or hobbies to strengthen connection to one’s goals, values or motivation for drinking less. The training is also gamified to maximise engagement and importantly can be delivered anonymously.

Associate Professor Victoria Manning and her team set out to determine SWiPE’s feasibility, acceptability and preliminary effectiveness in reducing alcohol craving and consumption among a large community sample of people drinking at hazardous levels. Participants were instructed to complete two training sessions a week for four weeks. Between August 2020 and February 2021, 1309 participants across Australia signed up and commenced training.

The study found that among those who completed post-training assessment,

the number of standard drinks reduced from a mean of 32.8 in the week before training to a mean of 24.7 in week four of training. Importantly, it remained significantly lower a month after training. Participants also reported significant reductions in drinking days, alcohol craving and alcohol dependence.

The acceptability of the app ratings were good and participants reported positive experiences with SWiPE, both in terms of reducing their alcohol craving and use and in reinforcing their goals and values.

Associate Professor Manning says, “We’re really excited by the study findings which suggest SWiPE could be a highly scalable, widely-accessible support tool for helping people reducing their alcohol use, available wherever and whenever they most need it.”

SWiPE



*“I really felt this app has helped me cut down A LOT!”*

**Participant**



*“Easy to use, fun, seemed to work, reminded me of my values.”*

**Participant**



*“After a tough year this little app has got me in a better place.”*

**Participant**



*“It helped more than anything else I have used to try to stop drinking.”*

**Participant**

# SUPPORTING VETERANS IN THEIR TRANSITION FROM THE DEFENCE FORCE TO CIVILIAN LIFE



Veterans' health and wellbeing remains an important national health issue in Australia. In April this year, the Federal Government announced a Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

This announcement has been welcomed by veterans' families, friends and colleagues impacted by mental health problems and suicide. Leaving the military and transitioning to normal life is a critical time for veterans' wellbeing, as it can lead to mental, physical and social problems. This transition is often a time characterised by difficulties adjusting to civilian society and in forming supportive social connections.

To understand the effects of moving from military to civilian life, researchers from Turning Point conducted a study, funded by the Defence Health Foundation, examining the transition experiences of 80 Australian Defence Force veterans. Using a survey, interviews and a novel-mapping task where veterans intricately traced their social connections, the study explored the relationship between veterans' social group memberships, identities and wellbeing.

The study showed that joining the military involved a process of socialisation into military culture

that, for most participants, led to the development of a military identity. Veterans that had an abrupt or difficult discharge from the defence force were more likely to experience negative impacts on their social group engagement and wellbeing in civilian life.

Lead author of the study, Dr Tony Barnett said: "We often found that participants who had a sudden, unexpected discharge from defence after a long period of service were the most vulnerable. When you dedicate 10 or 20 years of your life to the military and that all changes quite suddenly, it can be very isolating."

The study also indicated that being connected with multiple civilian social groups may act as positive psychological resources for veterans during their transition, however it could also be a potential source of conflict, especially when veterans are trying to re-engage with people in the general community that may have different norms or beliefs.

"Serving in the military inscribes within many veterans a strong sense of service, altruism and giving back to their community.



To be able to re-engage veterans in a way that allows them to continue to play a part in civilian society and 'give back', through things such as engaging with new social groups or volunteering to support other veterans, is important in helping them to transition from military to civilian life," said Dr Barnett.

More campaigns and initiatives that encourage veterans to engage with supportive social groups, that allow them to draw on their values around service, giving back, and altruism, could lead to improved mental, physical and social wellbeing following a career in the military.

# BUILDING THE EVIDENCE-BASE FOR TELEHEALTH

**There has been a rapid expansion in telehealth use globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with research to understand the benefits of treatments offered via these methods now needed more than ever.**

Turning Point's Ready2Change program is a multiple-session outbound telephone-delivered cognitive and behavioural intervention for alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems, offering clients a novel way to engage in treatment. Clients are typically referred to the Ready2Change program through DirectLine, the statewide AOD helpline in Victoria. A body of research is underway to understand the benefits of this program for different clients and drugs of concern.

A recent study of routinely collected data from the Ready2Change program found it to decrease substance use problem severity for clients with alcohol, methamphetamine and cannabis use problems, and also had secondary positive effects on clients' co-occurring substance use and psychological distress.

***“Participants reported that the telephone delivered program helped them to manage their alcohol use, and that they were able to develop a strong rapport with their counsellor despite sessions being provided by telephone.”***

**– Research Fellow Dr Jasmin Grigg**

“This is one of the first studies to demonstrate the benefits of a telephone-delivered treatment program that is embedded within a statewide helpline, where helpline service provision is extended beyond single-session crisis support to provide multiple treatment sessions,” said Turning Point Research Fellow Dr Jasmin Grigg.

Findings also showed that Ready2Change is being accessed by people living in all geographical locations, with a higher rate of participation among individuals located in regional areas where AOD treatment services are typically more difficult to attend.

This research adds to findings of a recent qualitative study of clients' experiences of the Ready2Change program, which found individuals with alcohol use problems had positive experiences of treatment provided by telephone.

“Participants reported that the telephone-delivered program helped them to manage their alcohol use,

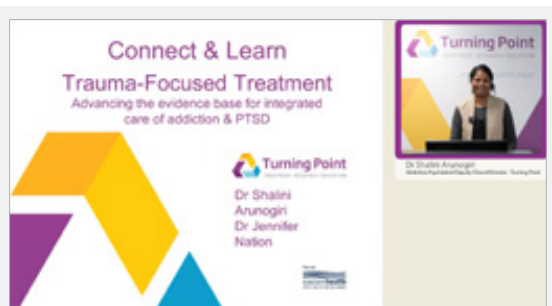
and that they were able to develop a strong rapport with their counsellor despite sessions being provided by telephone,” said Dr Grigg.

Turning Point and Monash University are also conducting two nationwide randomised controlled trials of the Ready2Change program for alcohol and methamphetamine problems, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Data collection for the first trial, targeting alcohol problems, has recently been completed.

Despite experiencing high levels of alcohol problem severity, and multiple treatment barriers prior to engaging with Ready2Change, 344 participants were recruited to Ready2Change, of whom the majority were new to treatment. Data analysis for this trial are currently underway. Participant recruitment for the second trial, targeting methamphetamine problems, commenced in February 2021 and will conclude at the end of 2022.



# WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS



## Turning Point webinars

Turning Point offers an extensive range of webinars to support best practice for health professionals and educators. With audiences moving online due to COVID-19, increased marketing and live streaming of the webinars, attendance reached record numbers in 2021.

Webinars this year included 'Trauma Informed Acceptance and Commitment Therapy' held in June with 488 attendees; 'Predictors of cognitive functioning in presentations to addiction neuropsychology: Are we paying enough attention to modifiable risk factors?' held in July with 380 attendees; and 'Advancing the evidence-base for integrated care of co-occurring addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder' held in August with 440 attendees.

Attendances throughout the year have risen significantly with an average of over 250 attendees tuning in.

### Feedback:

*"Very helpful and practical webinar. Glad I had the opportunity to be a participant."*

*"Despite being a nurse working in alcohol and other drugs, I had very little knowledge of sensory modulation and found this webinar informative and helpful. I will definitely use my new knowledge at the detox where I work. Thank you."*

## BreakThrough

BreakThrough is a unique program that focuses on helping family members across Victoria to better understand addiction, improve communication and wellbeing, and access appropriate support networks. Since 2015, Turning Point has delivered BreakThrough in partnership with the Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC), and has supported over 7000 participants.

BreakThrough transitioned from face-to-face to online delivery due to COVID-19 restrictions and has had another very successful year in 2020-2021. This included a 17% increase in scheduled sessions, a 210% increase in registrations and 128% increase in actual attendees from the previous year.

Participants come from many different backgrounds, yet all are experiencing a similar situation. This commonality enables participants to provide support and hope to each other. The BreakThrough sessions continue to receive very positive feedback, with over 90% of attendees rating their satisfaction as high or very high (an increase of 10% from the previous year). In addition, almost all attendees (99%) say they would recommend BreakThrough to others.

Participants are asked how confident they feel about implementing the suggestions they have heard during the BreakThrough sessions. In 2020-2021, 92% of attendees said the likelihood was high or very high, while 87% said they had high or very high confidence in terms of getting help for their family as a result of their attendance.

### Feedback from participants:

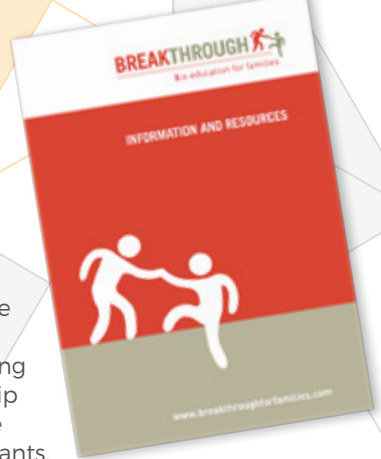
*"I thought it was fantastic, informative, was a safe and confidential space, and I really enjoyed the case studies in opening up conversations around boundaries and how they can be used with family members."*

*"Just want to say thank you to everyone for sharing their stories and helping to make my life more bearable. Listening to parents that have similar experiences and knowing I'm not on my own, that it's happened to a lot of people, is so comforting. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

### Feedback from a facilitator:

*"People who attend BreakThrough feel so relieved when they discover they aren't alone in dealing with a family member or friend's addiction. The program gives people an opportunity to be heard, not judged, feel supported and provided with hope, and this can help them move forward in their decision-making, interpersonal relationships, stress management and sense of wellbeing."*

**Anna Guthrie**  
BreakThrough facilitator



# WORKFORCE PIPELINE

## Workforce Development Interns

Turning Point, in consultation with other metropolitan Melbourne alcohol and other drugs (AOD) service providers, recognises the continued need to attract highly skilled and educated people into the workforce. Employees work in clinical and other settings with a relevant degree and sector qualifications, which can be a rewarding career choice for people wanting to make a positive difference in others' lives.

Turning Point's Educational Internship Program is open to tertiary-educated students in psychology, counselling and youth work streams. Students are invited to learn about the AOD sector, gain an awareness of employment pathways and upskill in industry-required competencies.

In February 2021, Turning Point had an intake of 15 students into the Educational Internship Program, which was delivered fully online for the first time. The internship consists of 100-150 hours of accredited competency-based Vocational Education and Training and an observational-only placement over 14 weeks to Higher Education students studying a relevant degree.

This combination of skills training, real-world clinical observation and training sessions delivered by Turning Point and other AOD service providers results in students developing a highly desirable and transferable skill set for gaining employment in the AOD and health and welfare sectors.

Responses from students on all surveyed questions were either excellent or good, with all students saying they would recommend the program to others. Responses also indicated that 66% would definitely seek employment in the AOD sector with the remaining indicating they would likely seek employment.

"We watch the students grow over the 14 weeks, not only learning about the AOD sector but also increasing their skills through the achievement of the 10 key competencies of the internship.

Each time a student tells us they have gained employment in the AOD sector we acknowledge their success and recognise that the internship is achieving its aims for the AOD sector," said Fay Staios, Strategic Lead, Workforce Development.

## Social Work placements

Over the past 14 months, Turning Point Specialist Clinical Services and Monash University's Department of Social Work have worked together to establish a social work student placement program pilot. The pilot program centres on developing a model of student field education in which higher volumes of Monash University social work students engage in placements and aims to increase the connection between social work research and clinical education.

Since June 2020, 38 social work students have received training, exposure and engagement with clinical practice and implemented a range of projects and small-scale research activities. The pilot program, overseen by Turning Point's Specialist Clinical Services Manager



Jonathan Tyler and Senior Social Work Placement Coordinator Piritta Murfett, has resulted in over twenty percent of students who have completed placement commencing their career in the AOD sector.

Additionally, it has given students the practical knowledge to engage and support people in their help-seeking for alcohol and other drug concerns, providing lifelong learning as they move into the workforce.

We look forward to continuing to develop the alcohol and other drug future workforce, and acknowledge the ongoing support of Monash University in helping to implement this program.

## Communications Team Interns

Turning Point also had communications interns from Monash's School of Media, Film & Journalism join us for the first time this year. The interns carried out a range of duties including writing articles and social media posts for several programs.

Providing early career work experience in non-clinical roles is an excellent opportunity to give back to the general community, build the reputation of the organisation and foster a better understanding of addiction in key spaces like media and communications where stigma and misinformation can have a broad impact.

# DEVELOPING WORKFORCE EXPERTISE IN TELEHEALTH

With the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, health services rapidly transitioned to providing telehealth services. However, for Turning Point this was not a new environment, as we have been providing 'healthcare at a distance' for over 30 years.

Our telehealth portfolio includes video consultations for individuals and groups, telephone help lines, text-based counselling services and telephone facilitated CBT programs. In addition, many of Turning Point's education programs, including post graduate and vocational courses are delivered online.

Turning Point is very well placed to provide education and training in the delivery of telehealth services to the health sector. Education specialists and the clinical teams at Turning Point combined in the last year to develop a number of telehealth focused resources including; webinars, tip sheets for clinicians and clients, online short courses and workshops.

Turning Point also worked with Monash University to develop and deliver a new Graduate Certificate of Telehealth, one of only a handful of such courses in Australia.

The online Graduate Certificate of Telehealth is due to begin taking students in 2022, in recognition of the long-term continuation of telehealth services well beyond the current pandemic.

This course covers the full range of telehealth modalities, and provides health practitioners and service managers with the knowledge and skills required to deliver safe and effective telehealth services to clients with alcohol and other drugs, mental health and behavioural difficulties.

The Graduate Certificate of Telehealth reflects Turning Point's commitment to developing clinical practice in emerging areas and being a leading provider of both telehealth services and professional education.

Dr Naomi Crafti, Senior Education and Research Fellow, Workforce Development says: "It's very exciting to see increasing access to quality healthcare across all our telehealth platforms, telephone, video calls and group programs, text based counselling, online psycho education and apps. The future of healthcare is definitely about meeting the client or patient where they are at."

*"It's very exciting to see increasing access to quality healthcare across all our telehealth platforms. Telephone, video calls and group programs, text based counselling, online psycho education and apps. The future of healthcare is definitely about meeting the client or patient where they are at."*

**- Dr Naomi Crafti**





# GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS

In 2021, Turning Point, in partnership with Monash University, commenced three separate post graduate courses, the Graduate Certificate of Addictive Behaviours and the Graduate Diploma of Addictive Behaviours, in addition to the existing Master of Addictive Behaviours.

This restructure has seen an unprecedented level of enrolment in the Graduate Certificate in 2021, providing evidence that the course restructure is responding to the needs of a dynamic workforce. About half of our Graduate Certificate students are supported with scholarships from the Department of Health.

Since the launch of the Master's program in 2014, annual enrolments have continued to grow, with 73 commencing students enrolled in 2021. Over the next three years, the course team will review the offering in each of the courses to afford greater versatility in design and study through the development of micro-credentialed short courses and intensive teaching mode units that may be offered flexibly throughout different teaching periods.

In 2022, a redeveloped offering of the Graduate Certificate comprising two units that underpin all three courses will see a greater focus on integrating



foundational knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to substance use disorders and other addictive behaviours. Students will become familiar with theories and models of addiction and examine research evidence to understand how it informs contemporary policy and public health responses, including harm minimisation initiatives.

Practice-relevant education on the application of screening and assessment tools for the identification of people experiencing addiction will be complemented by an introduction to evidence-based addiction treatment and support options.

Course enhancements include the incorporation of more varied, authentic and work-relevant assessment instruments that enhance the student experience through contemporary approaches of online learning and engagement within a social constructivism paradigm, including facilitated virtual learning sessions, interactive learning objects with formative assessment opportunities, and placing a greater emphasis on reflective practice.

A refresh of the online learning environment has been undertaken to support the enhancements with

a contemporary style and navigation to enhance the user experience.

"Redeveloping the Graduate Certificate offering is paramount to meet the needs of the diverse workforce represented in our student cohort to develop the knowledge translation skills to confidently and competently engage with patients and clients affected by addiction and use research evidence to inform their health and healthcare decision-making," said Dr Kirsten Schliephake, Course Coordinator, Graduate Programs in Addictive Behaviours.



*"Loved learning about the sociocultural impacts of substance use. Especially stigma, media, harm reduction."*

**Student**



*"The academic staff were helpful and engaged throughout this unit, and were responsive to questions and comments in relation to the course."*

*The Q&A sessions were well run, and the academic staff currently engaged in this course are clearly well versed in the subject topic. There was a diverse range of perspectives provided throughout the course, speaking to interesting topics."*

**Student**

# INCREASING OUR REACH

This year Turning Point expanded its communications program, creating and disseminating more content than ever before and greatly growing our social media presence and communities. The program's central focus has been to improve the general public's understanding of addiction and to reduce stigma, promoting our research and education programs and highlighting support options available to people affected by addiction.

The team also worked across the organisation in creating content that is informed by experts, while also being clear and easily accessible for the organisation's broad audience.

"By investing in communications and putting evidence-based information out into the community, we can help offset misinformation about addiction, reduce stigma, improve help seeking and improve our client's treatment experiences and outcomes," says Carmen Harris, Associate Director Service Development & Business Support.

Increased communications activity has demonstrated a strong impact on website traffic and service contacts.

*"By putting evidence-based information out into the community, we can help offset misinformation about addiction, reduce stigma, improve help seeking and improve our client's treatment experiences and outcomes."*

– Carmen Harris

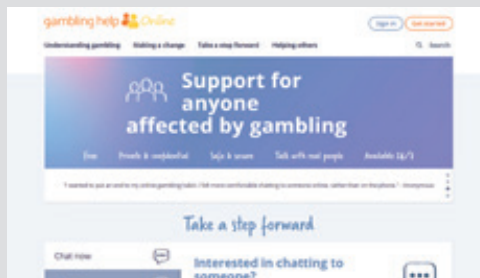
At Turning Point, we are dedicated to providing quality communications services with measurable outcomes and significant impact.

Our communications activity includes dedicated programs for:

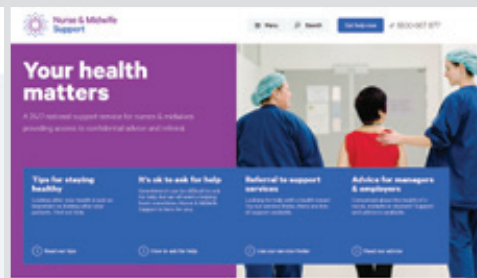
Turning Point



Counselling Online



Gambling Help Online

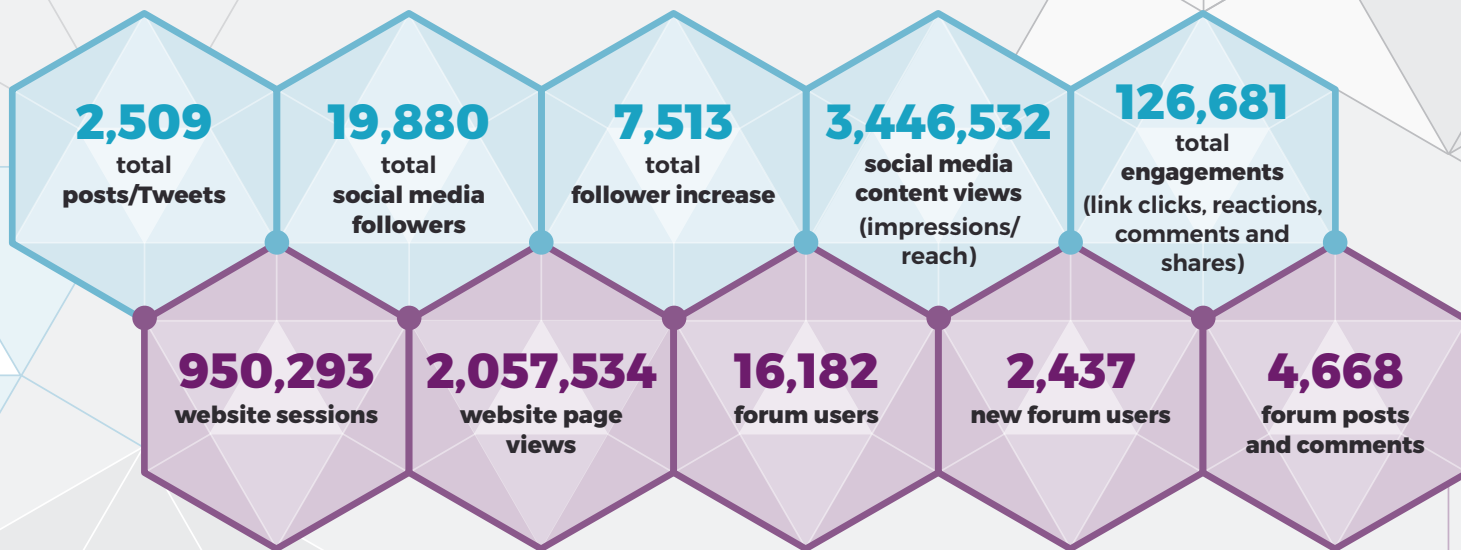


Nurse & Midwife Support













Dental Practitioner Support

Cumulative statistics for 2021 across these platforms is detailed below:



You can support our programs and services by visiting our websites, following us on social media and liking and sharing our content. Check out our social media channels here:

	 Website	 Facebook	 Twitter	 LinkedIn	 Instagram
 <b>Turning Point</b> TREATMENT · RESEARCH · EDUCATION	turningpoint.org.au	Turning Point	@TurningPointAU	Turning Point Addiction Treatment, Research and Education	
 <b>Counselling ONLINE</b> ALCOHOL & DRUG a TURNING POINT service	counselling online.org.au	Counselling Online	@CounsellingOnAU		
gambling help  <i>Online</i>	gamblinghelp online.org.au	Gambling Help Online	@GamblingHelpAU		
 <b>Nurse &amp; Midwife Support</b>	nmsupport. org.au	Nurse & Midwife Support	@NMSupportAU	Nurse & Midwife Support	@NMSupportAU
 <b>Dental Practitioner Support</b>	dpsupport. org.au	Dental Practitioner Support	@DPSupportAU	Dental Practitioner Support	

# TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

Recognition of our people and the incredible things they do is something we endeavour to embed in our work. We champion this in daily meetings and staff forums and through quarterly length-of-service awards and nominations for the Annual Eastern Health A2i Awards.

There have been many significant individual milestones and achievements over the last 12 months that exemplify the commitment and passion that creates significant impact within Turning Point and more broadly. We have included some of those achievements in this report. We would like to thank all our staff for their dedication and significant contributions in 2021.



## Farewell to Anne Birrell, retiring after 25 years of service

It was with great sadness and the very best of congratulations that we celebrated Anne Birrell's last day at Turning Point – Friday 9 July 2021.

We thank Anne for her enormous contribution over the past 25 years and wish her all the best for the future!

## Professor Dan Lubman appointed Member of the Order of Australia

Turning Point's Executive Clinical Director Professor Dan Lubman was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to medical education, research, treatment and policy in the field of addiction in the 2021 Australia Day Honours List.

Dan said he was thrilled and humbled to be recognised in this way, and the acknowledgement is a reflection of how perceptions of addiction are changing.

"Addiction remains the most stigmatised health condition. To be honoured in this way recognises the importance of addressing a public health issue that costs Australia and Australian families so much. I'm just delighted that our continued efforts to improve health outcomes for Australians affected by addiction have been recognised in this way."

David Plunkett Chief Executive of Eastern Health said: "Congratulations Dan, this is an incredible achievement and a testament to your tenacity and leadership.



Your unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries and saying we can do better has led to an incredible change locally and nationally in the way we treat, research and educate our workforce relating to addiction."

## Chloe Bernard represents Australia at United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Youth Forum

In March this year, Turning Point Research Assistant Chloe Bernard participated in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Youth Forum as the first Australian representative to attend. This five-day event brought together 62 young people, representing 41 countries, to discuss evidence-based approaches to drug use prevention across the lifespan.



# HELPLINE SERVICES

## Alcohol and Drug Helpline Services

### DirectLine Victoria

☎ 1800 888 236

### Ice Advice Line

☎ 1800 423 238

### Northern Territory Alcohol and Drug Information Service

☎ 1800 131 350

### Tasmanian Alcohol and Drug Information Service

☎ 1800 811 994

### Victorian Drug Diversion Appointment Line (Police Only)

### Victoria Police e-Referral Program

### Family Drug Helpline

☎ 1300 660 068 (after hours)

## Online Counselling and Support Services

### Counselling Online (AOD - national)

🌐 [www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au)

### Gambling Help Online (national)

🌐 [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)

### SANE Forums

🌐 [www.saneforums.org](http://www.saneforums.org)  
(after hours forum moderation)

### DirectLine Online Counselling (Victoria)

🌐 [www.directline.org.au](http://www.directline.org.au)

## Consultation Services

### Victorian Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service

☎ 1800 812 804

### Tasmanian Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service

☎ 1800 630 093

### Northern Territory Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service

☎ 1800 111 092

### ACT Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service

☎ 03 9418 1082

## Gambling Helpline Services

### Gambler's Helpline Victoria

☎ 1800 858 858

### Gambling Helpline NSW

☎ 1800 858 858

### Gambling Helpline Tasmania

☎ 1800 858 858

### Gambling Helpline Northern Territory

☎ 1800 858 858 (after hours)

### Gambling Helpline South Australia

☎ 1800 858 858

### Gambler's Help Youth Line Victoria

☎ 1800 262 376

### Warruwi Gambling Help

☎ 1800 752 948

## Support Services for Health Professionals

### Nurse and Midwife Support

☎ 1800 667 877

🌐 [www.nmsupport.org.au](http://www.nmsupport.org.au)

### Dental Practitioner Support

☎ 1800 377 700

🌐 [www.dpsupport.org.au](http://www.dpsupport.org.au)

## Information websites

### AODstats

🌐 [www.aodstats.org.au](http://www.aodstats.org.au)

### DirectLine (AOD)

🌐 [www.directline.org.au](http://www.directline.org.au)

### Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service (DACAS)

🌐 [www.dacas.org.au](http://www.dacas.org.au)

### Counselling Online (AOD)

🌐 [www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au)

### Gambling Help Online

🌐 [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)

# PARTNERSHIPS

Each year, Turning Point works with a range of organisations across the alcohol and other drug sector, gambling help sector, broader healthcare community, government and academia. The collaborative relationships we share with our partners are invaluable and we are extremely grateful to them for their assistance, whether it is through funding, project participation, advice or support.

Below is a list of organisations that Turning Point has been fortunate to work with in 2021.

- ACSO-COATS
- Access Health & Community
- ACT Ambulance Service
- ACT Health
- Albert Road Clinic
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- Alcohol Office, NSW Health
- Alcohol Research Group Emeryville, California, USA
- Alfred Health
- Ambulance Tasmania
- Ambulance Victoria
- Amity Services Northern Territory
- Area 4 Pharmacotherapy Network
- Association of Participating Service Users
- Auckland University
- Aurelius
- Australian Catholic University
- Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine
- Australian Community Support Organisation
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority
- Australian Injury Prevention Network
- Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Australian National University
- Australian Rechabite Foundation
- Australian Research Council
- Australasian Vital Statistics Interest Group
- Ballarat Community Health Centre
- Banyule Community Health Service
- Barwon Health
- Barwon Youth
- Bendigo Community Health
- beyondblue
- Blackfella Films
- Bouverie Centre
- Breast Screen Victoria
- Burnet Institute
- Camurus
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Caraniche
- Catholic Care
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Canada
- Centre for Health Initiative, University of Wollongong
- Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research, University of Queensland
- Commonwealth Department of Health
- Chisholm TAFE
- City of Melbourne
- City of Port Phillip
- City of Stonnington
- City of Whittlesea
- City of Yarra
- Curtin University
- Dandenong Drug Court
- Dandenong Magistrates Court
- Deakin University
- Defence Health
- Dental Board of Australia
- Department of Communities, Queensland
- Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
- Department of Health, Commonwealth
- Department of Health, Northern Territory
- Department of Justice, Victoria
- Drummond Street Services
- EACH
- Eastern Health Foundation
- Eastern Melbourne PHN
- Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)
- Families Australia
- Flinders University
- Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health
- Gateway Community Health
- Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria
- Google
- Harvard University Medical School
- Inspiro Community Health Service
- Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney
- Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland
- IPC Health
- Jamison Trauma Institute
- Jesuit Social Services
- Knox Community Health Service
- Latrobe Community Health
- La Trobe University
- Latrobe Valley Community Health Service
- Leadership Victoria
- Logan House (Queensland)
- Malvern Private Hospital
- Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne
- Mental Health Professionals Network
- Menzies Institute
- Monash Alfred Injury Network

- Monash Health
- Monash University
- National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales
- National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- National Research Centre for Environmental Toxicology, University of Queensland
- Networking Health Victoria
- New York State Psychiatric Institute
- North Richmond Community Health
- NSW Ambulance Service
- NSW Department of Justice
- NSW Health
- Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation
- Nursing & Midwifery Health Program Victoria
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
- Odyssey House
- Orygen Youth Health
- Penington Institute
- Peninsula Drug and Alcohol Program
- Peninsula Health
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Phoenix Australia
- Queensland Ambulance Service
- RMIT University
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- SalvoCare Eastern
- SANE
- San Francisco VA Health Care System
- Self Help Addiction Resource Centre
- SMART Recovery International
- SMART Recovery Australia
- South Australian Ambulance Service
- South Australian Office of Problem Gambling
- South City Clinic
- South East Alcohol and Drug Service
- St John's Ambulance, Northern Territory
- St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne
- Star Health (formerly Inner South CHS)
- Stepping Up
- Taskforce
- The Salvation Army
- Unity Care ReGen
- University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
- University of California, San Francisco
- University of Calgary, Canada
- University of Melbourne
- University of Michigan
- University of Newcastle
- University of New England
- University of New South Wales
- University of Oregon, USA
- University of Queensland
- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- University of Waikato, New Zealand
- University of Washington
- University of Western Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- VicHealth
- Victoria Police
- Victoria University
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
- Victorian Auditor General's Office
- Victorian Coroner's Court
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
- Victorian Serious Trauma Registry (VSTR)
- Western Health
- Western Sydney University
- Windana
- Women's Alcohol and Drug Services World Health Organisation
- Youth Support and Advocacy Service
- University of New England

**Rethink  
Addiction**

Rethink Addiction is a coalition of organisations advocating for a change to Australia's attitude and response to addiction. Our campaign partners are listed below.

 You can also find out more on our website [www.RethinkAddiction.org.au](http://www.RethinkAddiction.org.au)

- Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies Northern Territory (AADANT)
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF)
- Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania
- Alliance for Gambling Reform
- Ambulance Victoria
- The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)
- The Australasian Injury Prevention Network
- The Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol & other Drugs
- Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Council
- Australian Medical Association (AMA)
- Australian Nurses and Midwifery Federation, Victoria Branch (ANMF)
- Ballarat Community Health
- Barwon Health
- The Buttery
- Deakin University
- Directions Health Services
- Drug Policy Australia
- The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia (DANA)
- Eastern Health
- Families Australia
- FARE
- First Step
- The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Health
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Health and Community Services Union
- Hello Sunday Morning
- Lives Lived Well
- Matilda Centre
- Monash University
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
- Odyssey House Victoria
- Penington Institute
- The Salvation Army
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- Real Drug Talk
- Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)
- Sir David Martin Foundation
- SMART (Self Management and Recovery Training)
- Sober in the Country
- Star Health
- TaskForce Community Agency
- Turning Point
- Uniting
- Untoxicated
- Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
- Windana
- YSAS



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📠 (03) 9416 3420

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🌐 www.turningpoint.org.au



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