



## CMHDARN CONNECT

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Welcome to the fourth edition of CMHDARN Connect.

This edition is full to the brim of great content from the alcohol and other drug and mental health sectors!

CMHDARN updates:

On the 5th of February, CMHDARN held the 1st webinar in a series of webinars to support the development of research skills in the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors. The webinar, "Why Research" covered questions such as: What is research? What is evaluation? How do we do research within services and many more.

Please see below (in *Webinars*) for information about panelists and a link to watch the webinar (in case you missed it).

The annual CMHDARN Symposium will be held in Sydney on the *15th of May*. The Symposium planning is coming together behind the scenes. For now, a reminder to save the date. We hope you can come and celebrate 10 years of CMHDARN.

If you have read any articles that you'd like to share or are conducting research and you'd like a place to publish results, please get in touch at [info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](mailto:info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au)

Warm regards,

Jo

CMHDARN Coordinator

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## CMHDARN RESEARCH ETHICS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Would you like to engage in ethical research to improve the delivery of services to consumers / clients in the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors?

CMHDARN has a committee to support your research!

For more information, please see '[Information for Applicants](#)' or contact the CMHDARN Coordinator at [info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](mailto:info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au)

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## Findings from an evaluation of ACON's Substance Support Service

### Why evaluate ACON's Substance Support Service?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & intersex (LGBTI) people report higher rates of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and harms compared to non-LGBTI people and have been identified as a priority population in the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026. Higher rates of AOD among LGBTI people are often understood to be due to stigma and discrimination, as well as the normalisation of AOD use in LGBTI communities.

In Australia, there has been little research on AOD treatment among LGBTI people. Questions on sexual and gender minority status are not part of the minimum data routinely collected by mainstream AOD services across Australia, although from 2016 the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) has recommended optional questions about gender and sexual identity should be included when reporting client outcomes at non-governmental organisation (NGO) AOD services in New South Wales (NSW). In addition, services tailored for LGBTI people have rarely been evaluated, so it is unclear whether the needs of these communities are being met by current services...

Click [HERE](#) for the full article

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## CMHDARN RESEARCH SHOWCASE

Have you published recently?

CMHDARN maintains a bibliography of published research by the members of NADA / MHCC / CMHDARN to showcase the important work that is happening in our sectors.

Please email [info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](mailto:info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au) if you have published recently and would like your work to be included in this great [resource](#).

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## CMHDARN's Community Research Mentoring Program

*"The mentoring program can really assist you in identifying the best research questions and methodology" – Mentee*

Applications are open for the Community Research Mentoring Program.

The program is open to MHCC or NADA members who want to develop and conduct research guided by an expert mentor. Designed to support practice-based research, the program helps to build the skills of the mentee and to equip them with knowledge about research processes and measuring impact and outcomes.

- Developing research question/s
- Guidance on how to conduct a literature search
- Advice regarding procedures and measures to include in an evaluation of a service
- Statistical advice to assist with the analysis of data collected by a service
- Advice on quantitative and/or qualitative studies within a service

*What mentees have said:*

"The mentoring program has really helped establish our practice-based research and navigating the many options on clear and relevant research methodology"

*The mentor's experience:*

"It has been fantastic being part of the CMHDARN mentoring program and to facilitate the application of research methods to real-world settings. I have thoroughly enjoyed developed relationships with the fabulous front-line workers I have been mentoring"

To apply email [info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](mailto:info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au)  
or visit the CMHDARN website at [cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](http://cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au)

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**NADA Conference 2020: Enhancing Connections  
4-5 June 2020**

[nadaconference.org.au](http://nadaconference.org.au)

Early bird registrations are now open! Get in quick - go to [nadaconference.org.au](http://nadaconference.org.au)

For information about key notes and other conference details, please go the dedicated conference website above.

### *Abstracts*

NADA invites abstract submissions for oral papers, workshops, symposium and poster presentations for the NADA Conference 2020: Enhancing connections. This is an opportunity for you to showcase your innovative practice and research addressing the diverse needs of people accessing AOD services. We encourage workers and services across all sectors to submit an abstract as the focus of this conference is building connections and collaborations. Interactive sessions are encouraged to maximise opportunities for conference participants to exchange practice and experience. Abstracts are now open and must be submitted by Monday 9 March 2020. [Download the submission guidelines](#)

### *AOD Awards for the NSW Non Government Sector*

NADA invites nominations for the 2020 AOD Awards for the NSW Non Government Sector. The awards acknowledge the significant contribution of the sector in preventing and reducing alcohol and other drug related harms across NSW communities through leadership, program design and delivery, and dedicated workforce.

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## **Cracks in the Ice: evidence-based resources to guide health professionals in their practice when faced with issues related to crystal methamphetamine ('ice').**

Cracks in the Ice provides trusted, evidence-based and up-to-date information and resources about crystal methamphetamine for health professionals working across a range of sectors including frontline workers in alcohol and other drug (AOD) settings and mental health practitioners.

The Cracks in the Ice online toolkit provides access to a range of resources for health professionals including:

- [Training packages and online resources](#) about crystal methamphetamine
- [Quick tips](#) for managing and working with clients
- [Guidelines](#) for different groups of health workers including nurses and emergency services workers
- [Tips for working with diverse clients](#) and communicating safely about AOD
- A range of [webinars](#) on the latest research and resources about ice

Click [HERE](#) to access more resources for health professionals.

In addition, you can order information brochures and booklets for your community, free of charge with complimentary delivery anywhere in Australia. These resources can be distributed to patients affected by ice, their family and friends and amongst your colleagues. To order these hardcopy resources and view the digital versions, click [here](#).

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## Useful Resources from across the sectors

### Research papers / books / reports

#### *The ableism elephant in the academy: a study examining academia as informed by Australian scholars with lived experience*

Mellifont, D. et al (2019)

The academy should be a welcoming environment for people with disability. Across Australia, however, there is a current shortage of programmes supporting people with disability to develop their careers as researchers. This article critically investigates current practice and experiences concerning universities and the employment and career development of people with disability as advised by the literature, and how this practice aligns with the lived experiences of several of our authors. Our review of the literature utilising Scopus, PsycINFO and ProQuest databases found a deficiency of research attention on this topic, with only 16 relevant articles identified. This paucity of literary evidence has been augmented in the article by personal stories shared by four of its authors. By focusing on evidence-based measures with potential to support disability employment and career pathways throughout universities in Australia and elsewhere, this article challenges leaders to address ableism and to advance a more inclusive academy.

Click [HERE](#) for access to the full article

#### *Using systematic collaborative reflection to enhance consumer-led mental health research.*

Honey, A., Berry, B., Hancock, N., Scanlan, J., Schweizer, R., & Waks, S. (2019). British Journal of Occupational Therapy. DOI: [10.1177/0308022619862126](https://doi.org/10.1177/0308022619862126)

Consumer-led and collaborative research is consistent with occupational therapy principles of inclusion and client-centredness, and is increasingly valued in mental health. Our research team of three occupational therapists and three consumers was funded to conduct a consumer-led mental health service evaluation. Because of a lack of previous research to guide our practice, we engaged in a collaborative autoethnography to gather information about the process of consumer-led research. We discovered that the systematic reflective processes of collaborative autoethnography played a critical part in shaping the very experiences being investigated. This article describes the impact of using this systematic collaborative reflection on the process of consumer-led research.

#### *Patterns of alcohol and other drug treatment service use in Australia: 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2018 - [HERE](#)*

Specialist alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services are part of a comprehensive approach to reducing demand in Australia—1 of the 3 pillars of harm minimisation that underpin the National Drug Strategy 2017–26.

AOD treatment services provide a broad range of services and support to people affected by substance use. Clients accessing these services commonly experience multiple episodes of treatment spanning several years.

Using the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set, this report looks at the service use patterns of clients who received treatment from publicly funded specialist AOD treatment services between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2018, for 3 client cohorts:

- continual service users (2,436 clients or 3%)—clients who received at least 1 closed treatment episode in each collection period between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2018
- episodic service users (24,089 clients or 30%)—clients who received at least 1 closed treatment episode in 2014–15, and at least one other closed treatment episode in at least 1 (but not all) of the 3 years after that
- transitory service users (54,423 clients or 67%)—clients who received at least 1 closed treatment episode in 2014–15 only.

### *Prevention of suicide and reduction of self-harm among people with substance use disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials*

Padmanathan, Prianka et. al. 2019

Background: People with substance use disorder (SUD) are at significantly greater risk of suicide compared with the general population. In recent years the number of suicides resulting from drug poisoning in England and Wales has increased. We sought to identify and evaluate the effect of interventions to prevent suicide or reduce self-harm among people with SUD.

Methods: We conducted a systematic review of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of interventions for people with SUD that included suicide or self-harm-related primary outcomes. We searched Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), PsycINFO, PubMed, Embase and Web of Science from inception until 13th January 2019. Studies were assessed for bias using the Cochrane Risk of Bias 2 tool. A random effects meta-analysis of standardised mean differences (SMD) was conducted.

Results: We identified six RCTs from four countries (Australia, Iran, the United States of America and the United Kingdom) comprising 468 participants in total. All but one study investigated psychosocial interventions. On average across studies there was weak evidence of a small positive effect of interventions on suicide or self-harm outcomes ( $d = -0.20$ , 95% CI =  $-0.39-0.00$ ).

Limitations: Studies were heterogeneous in terms of population, intervention, controls and outcome. There were some concerns regarding bias for all trials. All trials were liable to type II error.

Conclusions: Evidence is currently lacking regarding the effectiveness of interventions to prevent suicide and reduce self-harm amongst people with SUD.

Full text article - [HERE](#)

### *Mental health outcomes associated with the use of amphetamines: A system review and meta-analysis*

McKetin, R et. al. 2019

Background: The use of amphetamines is a global public health concern. We summarise global data on use of amphetamines and mental health outcomes.

Methods: A systematic review and meta-analysis (CRD 42017081893). We searched Medline, EMBASE, PsycInfo for methamphetamine or amphetamine combined with psychosis, violence, suicidality, depression or anxiety. Included studies were human empirical cross-sectional surveys, case-control studies, cohort studies and randomised controlled trials that

assessed the association between methamphetamine and one of the mental health outcomes. Random effects meta-analysis was used to pool results for any use of amphetamines and amphetamine use disorders.

Findings: 149 studies were eligible and 59 were included in meta-analyses. There was significant heterogeneity in effects. Evidence came mostly from cross-sectional studies. Any use of amphetamines was associated with higher odds of psychosis (odds ratio [OR] = 2.0, 95%CI 1.3–3.3), violence (OR = 2.2, 95%CI 1.2–4.1; adjusted OR [AOR] = 1.4, 95%CI 0.8–2.4), suicidality OR = 4.4, 95%CI 2.4–8.2; AOR = 1.7, 95%CI 1.0–2.9) and depression (OR = 1.6, 95%CI 1.1–2.2; AOR = 1.3, 95%CI 1.2–1.4). Having an amphetamine use disorder was associated with higher odds of psychosis (OR = 3.0, 95%CI 1.9–4.8; AOR = 2.4, 95%CI 1.6–3.5), violence (OR = 6.2, 95%CI 3.1–12.3), and suicidality (OR = 2.3, 95%CI 1.8–2.9; AOR = 1.5, 95%CI 1.3–1.8).

Interpretation: Methamphetamine use is an important risk factor for poor mental health. High quality population-level studies are needed to more accurately quantify this risk. Clinical responses to methamphetamine use need to address mental health harms.

Full text article - [HERE](#)

### *Mental illness affects a record 3 in 4 people seeking addiction help in 2019 - Odyssey House NSW Snapshot Report*

A record three in four people seeking help for alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems in 2019 also had a mental health condition, according to a major report released today by one of Australia's largest drug treatment organisations, which also treated 24 per cent more people during the year.

Odyssey House NSW reports 77 per cent of its residential rehabilitation clients during the 2019 financial year had a co-occurring mental health condition: 1.4 times (42%) higher than 2017 (54% of clients) and more than seven times higher than 1999 (10% of clients).

Click [HERE](#) for the full report

### *Predictors of work engagement among Australian non-government drug and alcohol employees: Implications for policy and practice*

Duraisingam, V. et. al. 2019 Full text [HERE](#)

Background: The alcohol and other drugs (AOD) workforce faces multiple challenges including stigma, limited resources, ideological conflicts and complex demands. An engaged, supported and stable workforce is essential for optimal service provision, quality care, effective harm reduction implementation and cost efficiency. However little research has examined factors that impact worker engagement in the AOD sector. To inform policy and practice on cost efficient service provision and effective workforce development, this study examined a range of potential predictors of work engagement among Australian AOD non-government workers.

Methods: An online, cross-sectional survey of 294 non-government AOD workers measuring demographic, work-related psychosocial, and health and wellbeing variables was conducted in New South Wales, Australia. Multiple hierarchical linear regressions were conducted to identify significant predictors of worker engagement.

Results: Most AOD workers demonstrated high work engagement levels. Significant predictors of engagement included role clarity, leadership quality, growth opportunities, resilience and social support, and older age. These workers were likely to be more energised, enthusiastic and dedicated in their jobs.

Conclusions: This study is an important initial step in understanding work engagement among AOD workers. It offers valuable insights into ways to foster engagement, which in turn may ensure a more sustainable workforce that can deliver high quality care. Workers with high levels of engagement are more likely remain in their AOD roles over longer periods of time, acquire more skills and experience, and be better equipped to address complex demands. Workforce policies and programs specifically designed to enhance leadership skills and role clarity, while enhancing professional growth, resilience, and social supports, particularly for younger workers, are highlighted as essential strategies to promote engagement among AOD workers.

**SHARE WHAT YOU READ:** If you read a research paper / article or visit a website that you think is relevant to share with other CMHDARN members, send it to the CMHDARN Coordinator at [info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au](mailto:info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au). We are looking for papers / articles and websites that cover co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drugs and also mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors separately. I will collate the articles and develop a series of categories, to develop a resource that will sit alongside and complement the "CMHDARN Research Showcase".

## Webinars

### CMHDARN Webinar - "Why Research"

Mental health and alcohol and other drugs experts explored why research is integral to the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors; what research means to them and what defines evaluation.

Panel members included:

**Dr Belinda Green** - Senior Research Officer – Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre

- Belinda has over 15 years' experience research within the social, behavioural and health sciences and has published a variety of resources, journal articles, book chapters and other peer reviewed materials.

**Dr Rebecca Hardy** - Evaluation Manager - Black Dog Institute

- Rebecca is a community psychologist specializing in program evaluation, who has worked with government, community-based organizations, coalitions, and non-profits.  
Her areas of expertise include mental health and early childhood systems, and she utilises strengths-based, utilisation-focused, and participatory approaches to help these organisations and systems improve programs and services.

**Dr Peter Kelley** - Associate Professor – School of Psychology, University of Wollongong

- Peter is a registered Clinical Psychologist and has extensive clinical and research experience working with individuals diagnosed with severe mental illness and substance abuse problems. Peter's research is particularly
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focused on developing and trialling multiple health behaviour change interventions for at-risk population groups (i.e. mental health and substance abuse populations, Indigenous Australians).

The panel was facilitated by **Dr Suzie Hudson** (Clinical Director, Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies). Suzie is an accredited mental health social worker with over 20 years' clinical experience in the fields of substance misuse, mental health, forensics, research and evaluation.

Click [HERE](#) to watch and find associated resources

## *Turning Point Connect and Learn Webinar Series: Working with trans & gender diverse people*

Monday 24th February 10:00am - 11:00am AEST

[Register here for webinar](#)

Within this webinar we will also have an interview with a panellist, Christie, who has a lived experience of alcohol and other drugs dependence and navigating supports and treatment through the AOD service sector as a non-binary person.

This webinar will cover an introduction to gender diversity, differentiating sexual orientation, intersex status, gender identity and expressions. Also highlighted are key areas of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by trans and gender diverse people and related mental health impacts. Legislative obligations, tips and suggestions on working with trans and gender diverse people are also included.

There will be time allocated for Q & A.

**Presenter:** Sally Goldner's twenty years involvement in Victoria's LGBTIQ communities includes Transgender Victoria, co-facilitating Transfamily, presenting 3CR's "Out of the Pan" and as Bisexual Alliance Victoria Treasurer. She was awarded an Order of Australia in 2019, is a life member of 4 organisations, the 2015 LGBTI Victorian of the year and joined the Victorian Women's Honour Roll in 2016.

**Panellist:** Christie has a passion for all things social justice and storytelling. They have over 15 years of experience in Melbourne's theatre scene and have recently become active in the CS sector. They hope to channel their experiences of living on the margins and through many crises into meaningful change.

**Who should register?** This webinar is suitable for workers in the AOD, mental health, allied health and welfare sectors

**Registration:** There is no cost to attend the Connect & Learn webinar series but registrations are essential

Previous webinars are now on demand at the Turning Point website: <https://www.turningpoint.org.au/education/webinars>

## **Useful websites / resources**

*Alcohol and Drug Foundation - Library*

ADF Library is the largest and most up-to-date alcohol and other drugs (AOD) library in Australia, providing free access to more than one million resources including full-text articles from 4,000+ journals.

It's free to join – just go to the [website](#) to get your log on and password, then start searching.

### *Centre for Social Impact*

We believe everyone has a role to play in creating social change.

Our purpose is to catalyse positive social change, to help enable others to achieve social impact.

We do this through transformational research and education that is rigorous and purpose-driven. By working with people, communities and organisations to grow their capabilities through research, education, and leadership development.

We create tools, solutions, and leaders that enable change.

### *Research and insights into Poverty and Inequality in Australia* - <http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/>

ACOSS (the Australian Council of Social Service) has partnered with UNSW Sydney to undertake a five year research and impact collaboration to sharpen the national focus on poverty and inequality in Australia. The partnership monitors trends in poverty and inequality over time, explores drivers, and develops solutions to sharpen the focus and stimulate action to tackle these policy challenges. The partnership includes leading community service organisations Australian Red Cross, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, The Salvation Army, CoHealth, Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, The Smith Family and Anglicare Australia. It is supported by the BB & A Miller Foundation, David Morawetz's Social Justice Fund and Australian Communities Foundation Impact Fund.

### *Trauma-informed care and mental health: ACI Evidence Series*

It is very exciting to announce that the Trauma-informed care and mental health: ACI Evidence Series report was released in December 2019. Trauma-informed care is an approach to service delivery based on an understanding of the ways trauma affects people's lives, their service needs and service usage. It incorporates principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trust and empowerment.

Adopting a trauma-informed care approach has the potential to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint; enhance therapeutic relationships and their basis in trust, collaboration, respect and hope; and improve outcomes and value. This report summarises research evidence on the impact of trauma-informed approaches on processes and outcomes of care; and considers the extent to which mental health services in NSW are trauma-informed, using empirical evidence drawn from survey data and experiential evidence from consumers and clinicians.

The Report is available on the ACI website and ACI Mental Health Network homepage or click [HERE](#)

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## Speakeasy Podcast

[Annie Madden](#) and [Professor Carla Treloar](#) have dedicated much of their lives to working in taboo fields of research: blood borne viruses and drug users. These two brilliant minds bring a wealth of expertise, knowledge and insight to real world subjects in SpeakEasy, holding engaging conversations with very special guests each episode.

For more information, click [HERE](#)

### Other publications you might want to check out

#### *NADA Advocate*

Published quarterly, the Advocate raises significant issues relating to the non government AOD sector in NSW. Subscribe to develop your knowledge about, and be connected to, the sector. Click [HERE](#) for the latest issue.

#### *Newsletter from the Mental Health Commission of NSW*

Updates from the Mental Health Commission. Click [HERE](#) for the latest issue

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## Miscellaneous Sector News

### *Half a Million Steps Viewing*

Following on from the success of the Half a Million Steps screening held in November last year, we are holding a free follow up screening for those who weren't able to attend. This is a brilliant, emotional, heartbreaking and uplifting documentary which explores the stories of rural Australians with drug addiction, and the difficulties they face in accessing treatment.

#### [WATCH THE TRAILER](#)

Screening details are below:

Date: Thursday the 13th of February

Time: 3pm – 4:30pm

Location: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

Building R1, Room 104

22 -32 King St, Randwick

To attend, please register [here](#).

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## *Safe Storytelling - MHCC's newest training*

MHCC is excited to offer a new half-day course, Safe Storytelling, which was developed by our trainers with lived experience in response to sector demand.

Safe Storytelling is for workers who use their lived experience and personal stories when supporting people. The workshop covers purposeful, meaningful and sustainable storytelling, which can be used when workers are required to share their lived experience with clients.

Participants will be given the chance to craft their own purposeful story and will be equipped to understand safe disclosure.

This workshop is ideal for people who directly use storytelling in their role as well as managers or supervisors who may want to refresh their understanding of the basic tenets of safe storytelling.

Find more information [here](#) about this exciting new training

## *Comorbidity Training*

Is comorbidity on your CPD calendar this year? The Australian Government Department of Health-funded National Comorbidity Guidelines Online Training Program is a free, evidence-based program on the management and treatment of co-occurring alcohol or other drug and mental health conditions. Developed by researchers at The University of Sydney's Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use in collaboration with clinicians, consumers, carers and alcohol or other drug workers, the online training can be accessed here; [comorbidityguidelines.org.au](http://comorbidityguidelines.org.au)



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The Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) is a collaborative project between Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA), Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) and the Mental Health Commission of NSW.

[Visit the CMHDARN website here](#)