

# DIRECTIONS ACT

## DIRECT NEWS



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### Special points of interest:

- What is comorbidity?
- Is S.M.A.R.T. Recovery for you?
- When AOD meets Mental Health
- Mobile NSP hits the streets of Canberra
- Althea gains a comorbidity specialist
- Surviving the Christmas blues

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### Comorbidity Project ~ Building Capacity

In keeping with DIRECTIONS ACT's aim of reducing the adverse health, social and economic consequences of alcohol and drug use, we are pleased to announce the establishment of the DIRECTIONS ACT Comorbidity Project. DIRECTIONS ACT was successful in receiving funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the Improved Services for People with Drug and Alcohol Problems and Mental Illness Initiative.

As a result of this funding we have been able to employ one full-time and one part-time member of staff to build capacity within DIRECTIONS ACT so that we can deliver the highest level of service to our clients.

The Comorbidity Team will work closely with Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) and Mental Health (MH) services in the ACT to develop links across these agencies. The collaborative approach will

build networks and create pathways that allow clients with comorbidity issues to access the specialist services they need, addressing both their AOD and MH issues.

#### **The Comorbidity Project aims to:**

Employ evidence based research to improve work practices and enhance existing skills amongst DIRECTIONS ACT staff to enable the organisation to support clients with comorbidity issues in a best practice setting.

Improve the quality of, and access to, services for clients with comorbidity issues in the ACT.

Increase awareness of comorbidity issues amongst DIRECTIONS ACT staff, AOD and MH services, clients and their families

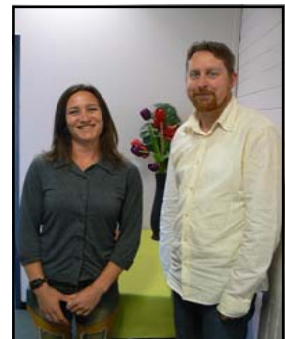
Develop pathways for clients between AOD and MH Services through the establishment of sustainable cross sector networks.

Develop training and

resources with a comorbidity focus to be delivered to all members of DIRECTIONS ACT staff.

Review DIRECTIONS ACT policies and procedures to ensure they reflect the organisation's commitment to quality service delivery with a comorbidity focus.

The Comorbidity Project Team are looking forward to engaging our staff, clients and other agencies in the coming months in order to develop best practice standards for DIRECTIONS ACT.



**The Comorbidity Team: Fiona Day, Training Coordinator and Jason Morrissey, Project Manager.**

### Comorbidity or Double Trouble?

Comorbidity is a term used to describe the presence of two or more illnesses coexisting in a person's life. A client with AOD addiction and a concurrent mental health disorder is considered to be a comorbid client. There are many other names used to describe comorbidity including; Dual Disability, Dual Diagnosis, Mentally Ill Chemical Abuser (MICA), Chemical Abusing

Mentally Ill (CAMI) and Double Trouble. Regardless of the terminology used, treatment of comorbid clients is extremely challenging, and effective treatment requires both the AOD and Mental Health sectors to offer collaborative assistance.

Many clients are unaware that they have coexisting illnesses and the masking effect of substance abuse or mental

health issues can make it difficult for workers to accurately identify the whole client picture.

Due to the complex nature of identifying comorbidity in the population, there has been under-reporting of the actual figures. However, estimates range from 50-80% of AOD clients and 20% within the Mental Health sector.

## Maysoon... 'women walking proudly'

The program includes:

- Free and confidential support
- Friendly, non-judgemental and professional workers
- Meet other mothers
- Access to services including a Registered Nurse and AOD counsellors
- Learn new skills
- Access to other community services and guest speakers
- Fun activities
- Healthy lunch, menus and food
- Helpful information
- Pampering

As parents we try to aim for a loving and caring environment to raise our kids, which is so vital to the health of both the parent and the child. We believe that providing knowledge and skills for parents is so important. It helps people gain confidence in parenting, strengthens relationships and builds resilience in kids.

Maysoon is fully funded through Health Promotion Grants and is offered by DIRECTIONS ACT for women, with young children, who are using alcohol and other drugs or who are in recovery. Pregnant women or women who have children with Care and Protection orders are very welcome.

Sometimes we all need a little assistance to get the best possible care for ourselves and our children. Maysoon is open to all women who wish to improve their health and wellbeing in a safe and accepting environment.

We provide free childcare while you are at Maysoon. Your child will enjoy playing with other children in a different and safe environment while you enjoy being with other women at Maysoon.

DIRECTIONS ACT will run the next Maysoon program in the New Year.

For more information about Maysoon or assistance in gaining free childcare, please contact

**Ineke on 6122 8038.**



## S.M.A.R.T. Recovery

S.M.A.R.T. - Self Management And Recovery Training - is a peer managed, self help group that assists people to recover from addictions and/or drug dependencies.

S.M.A.R.T. Recovery teaches practical skills to help individuals deal with their addiction problems, enabling them to abstain and achieve a healthy lifestyle balance.

S.M.A.R.T. Recovery is different from the AA/NA model that clients may have attended or heard about. Smart Recovery encompasses a 4 point plan which is based upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) tools.

These are;

- a) Motivation to abstain
- b) Coping with urges
- c) Problem solving
- d) Lifestyle balance

The group is facilitated by a highly experienced DIRECTIONS AOD counsellor.

S.M.A.R.T. Recovery is held every Tuesday from 10:30am-12:00pm at:

DIRECTIONS ACT  
1 Bradley St  
WODEN

*For more information about S.M.A.R.T. Recovery please contact Barry on 6122 8000*



## Arcadia House Detox and Withdrawal Centre

A case study illustrating the challenges of assisting clients with comorbidity issues.

The following story highlights the systemic problems in securing appropriate assistance for AOD clients who have coexisting mental health issues. There are many skilled and caring workers across both the AOD and Mental Health sectors but there remain significant gaps when it comes to dealing with clients with multiple issues. In light of these problems, Arcadia House often ends up taking clients with comorbid issues. The Arcadia staff perform this task admirably. The following story demonstrates that many more resources need to be utilised and developed to ensure a holistic, cross sector response for clients with comorbid issues.

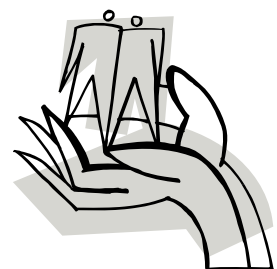
John\* first sought admission to Arcadia House to detox from Ice and Cannabis. Although no diagnosed mental illness was recorded on his intake assessment, he presented as very anxious and displayed paranoid behaviour. He was also aggressive and seemingly delusional upon admission, despite his assertion that he did not have any mental health issues. John's behaviour deteriorated and he refused to speak to the counsellors on duty. Arcadia staff determined that there were genuine concerns for John's mental health beyond the expected residual effects of withdrawal from his last drug use.



John was advised that if he would not speak with a counsellor, staff would seek an assessment by the Mental Health Crisis Team (CATT). John remained agitated and refused to cooperate with a CATT assessment until staff explained that the alternative was to discharge him from the program. John was insistent that he wished to remain at Arcadia House and complete his detox, so he agreed to meet with the CATT. The CATT found John's behaviour extremely aggressive, to the extent that they were not able to carry out a comprehensive psychiatric assessment of him.

The CATT informed Arcadia staff that whilst John was aggressive, it was not to a degree where they would enforce psychiatric treatment and advised that staff call the police if John became violent. Initially John's behaviour settled down despite his insistence that characters from the *Underbelly* TV series "have a hit out on [me]".

Unfortunately John became very agitated with another client in the house and was warned about his behaviour. Shortly after, John decided to discharge himself from Arcadia; his paranoia having escalated to the point that he felt unable to remain in the shared environment. The following day John rang back terrified for his life and sought re-admission to Arcadia House. He explained that the only reason he left the day before was that he "couldn't handle" the other client's difficult behaviours. Arcadia staff decided to re-admit John.



On John's return it was evident, however, that his psychosis had intensified and his behaviour had become too unpredictable for him to take part in a meaningful detox. John's father was contacted and he agreed to pick John up and to take him to the Psychiatric Ward, where he was admitted. Two hours later Arcadia received a call from a Mental Health worker wanting Arcadia to assess John for admittance to Arcadia as they felt his primary issue was substance abuse.

\*Real name not used.

**Arcadia House** is staffed 24 hours a day each week and is available to answer any questions about withdrawal and detox options. Call **6253 3055** or visit **[www.directionsact.com](http://www.directionsact.com)**.

## MOBILE Needle and Syringe Program

*Providing a mobile NSP service with information, free injecting equipment and disposal facilities into the ACT.....*



The Mobile NSP is a white Tarago van with a picture of DRIX on the side. It distributes information and free injecting equipment, which includes specialized equipment such as wheel filters and butterflies. The service will start on Tuesday 23 September 2008 at the locations and times listed below:

DAY	TIME	LOCATION
Tuesday	9:00am to 11:00am	Gungahlin - Carpark on the corner of Ernest Cavanagh & Gozzard Streets
Wednesday	9:00am to 11:00am	Tuggeranong - Carpark on the corner of Anketel & Pitman Streets (next to the Tuggeranong Health Centre)
Thursday	4:00pm to 6:00pm	Fyshwick - Carpark on the corner of Wollongong & Maryborough Streets
Friday	2:00pm to 3:30pm	Dickson Centre carpark on the corner of Badham & Antill Streets

### Needle and Syringe Program - assisting clients with comorbidity issues

The NSP provides equipment, education and information for safe intravenous drug use to clients in a professional and non-judgemental manner.

Some clients with comorbidity issues who access the NSP self-medicate because they don't like the effects of their prescribed medication. They have been diagnosed with mental health disorders but feel they can lead a more normal life by using illicit drugs. Others have not been diagnosed and don't realise that they may have a mental health issue.

NSP clients who present with mental health issues can often be delusional, psychotic, aggressive and vague. NSP staff build up confidence and trust with clients by embodying a respectful and caring attitude.

If clients are attending the NSP to seek help, they are often in crisis. The NSP workers will refer clients to the Crisis Counsellor on duty to offer help and support.

Alternatively, NSP workers will do what they can to assist the client, initially dealing with the cause of the client's crisis (e.g. a Housing issue, problems with Centrelink or a court appearance).

Staff will then try to liaise with the client's mental health worker, psychologist or counsellor (if they have one). If the client has not had contact with the mental health sector, staff will endeavor to connect and refer them to the appropriate service.

If NSP staff are concerned for the client's safety or well-being, they will call the CATT team or the police. However this would only occur if the client was threatening to harm themselves or others.

**For more information please contact the NSP on:**

**6285 3223 (Phillip NSP)  
6247 5230 (Civic NSP)**



*Althea Wellness Centre  
.....a place of healing*

When people are seeking help around their substance use it is not uncommon that they or their worker become concerned about experiences or ongoing symptoms which may be signs of a mental illness. Sometimes these are part of the ongoing substance use or withdrawal and sometimes they do indicate an underlying problem which could benefit from treatment.

Very large percentages of people who see either AOD services or Mental Health services have varying degrees of both kinds of problem. It is clear that outcomes are best for those who address both kinds of issues if they are present.

Althea Wellness Centre provides a clinic where an experienced Mental Health Worker is available to assess this possibility and give advice about what help is available and where you might go to get it.

The clinic is run by Steve Hartnett, a nurse with 35 years experience in psychiatric and mental health settings. His current position is as the Dual Diagnosis Worker for Mental Health ACT (MHACTION). MHACTION is providing this service to DIRECTIONS ACT clients as part of its commitment to Dual Diagnosis (also referred to as Comorbidity). Appointments usually last about 45 minutes to an hour.

**The Althea Mental Health Clinic operates fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon.**

**Appointments can be made through your DIRECTIONS worker on 6122 8000.**

**Youth Health Clinic every Wednesday at the Althea Wellness Centre  
For more or an appointment please call 6122 8044**

## COMPASS



### FAMILY SUPPORT

**Does someone in your family have a problem with alcohol or drugs?**

**Are you in need of counselling, support or understanding?**

**Need someone to listen with compassion who is not judgemental?**

DIRECTIONS ACT has a Family Support counsellor who facilitates our COMPASS support group for families.

Please call DIRECTIONS ACT and speak to Bek for more information: **6122 8000**

## Christmas Shutdown 2008

DIRECTIONS ACT Woden office and Arcadia House will close from 12 midday on Tuesday 23rd December, 2008 and will reopen on Monday 5th January, 2009.

For further information about support group dates over the Christmas period, please call DIRECTIONS ACT on **6122 8000**.



### NSP Civic and Phillip

Opening dates for Christmas:

Wed 24 Dec	9am – 5pm
Sat 27 Dec	10am – 2pm
Tues 30 Dec	9am – 5pm
Wed 31 Dec	9am – 5pm
Fri 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	9am – 5pm

*The Staff and Board of DIRECTIONS ACT would like to wish you a very happy and safe Christmas.*

# DIRECTIONS ACT

## DIRECTIONS ACT

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## Our Mission

To promote and maximise the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities affected by Alcohol and Other Drug related harms.

To improve health, social and economic outcomes by reducing the harmful effects of illicit drug use in the ACT and region.

## Aims

To implement intervention, assistance and support services to drug dependant persons, their significant others, extended families and the broader community through the optimisation of all available resources within the organisation and the community.

To utilise evidence based community education methodologies to minimise the adverse community impact of drug misuse.

## Our Programs

- Counselling Services
- Needle and Syringe Program
- Community Education
- Arcadia House Detox and Withdrawal Services
- Treatment Support Service
- Support Groups
- Primary Health Care
- Resources
- Outreach and Promotional Activities
- Althea Wellness Centre



## DIRECTIONS ACT

Drug  
Information  
Referral  
Education  
Counselling  
Treatment  
Intervention  
Options  
NSP  
Service

## Self care over Christmas

*Christmas is an opportunity for many families to get together and celebrate.*

*Unfortunately for some families and individuals, it is not always the happiest time of year.*

There is a lot of media hype around Christmas time, with a strong focus on family happiness, togetherness and unity. The unrealistic expectations for the festive season are fed by advertising images, TV "Xmas specials" and movies. The financial strain people can feel with pressure to buy gifts that they cannot always afford adds extra stress.

Often people abuse drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with the stress of Christmas, resulting in arguments, violence, physical injury or damaged relationships.

In preparing for the Christmas season, it is important to set realistic expectations for yourself and others. Despite what we see on television, there are many ways to spend Christmas day and there is certainly no right way.

If the thought of family time is stressful to you, perhaps sending a card or make a phone call instead of attending a family function would be less stressful. If you know that family functions "trigger" feelings you can't control, it's better to recognise it in advance and structure your day differently.

If you would like to be with family but are unable to, think of ways you can include them in your day. You could buy a candle for each person and light them, taking a few quiet moments to reflect on each person.

Try not to give in to the pressure that Christmas Day is the most important day of the year. This does not have to be the time to settle disputes or try to resolve problems in your life. If you really want to address issues, it is best to do so when you feel calm and centered; the stress of a busy Christmas Day is rarely the ideal time.

Arrange to spend Christmas Day with people you feel close to and safe with, focusing on the positives in your life.

If you need support over the Christmas period please call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

