

DIRECTIONS ACT

DIRECT NEWS WINTER 2011

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Volume 4 Issue 2

Winter 2011

Young People and Comorbidity

Mental health issues and drug use can affect many areas of a young person's life and the lives of those around them. If a person is experiencing mental illness and using drugs, the issues and impact on their lives can be more challenging than either on their own. For example, difficulties making a diagnosis, not complying with treatment, and interactions between the drugs and the mental illness, all adds to the heavy costs on individuals and their families.

Co-occurring substance use and mental health issues is a major problem for young people. According to the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, more than half of Australians seeking help for mental health problems also have substance use issues. Both substance misuse and mental health are known risk factors for suicide and their co-occurrence further increases the risk.

Comorbidity is of particular concern amongst young people. Youth services report that approximately 50-70% of young people who presented with an alcohol or substance use issue also had a mental health problem. Those aged 18-24 have the highest prevalence of mental health disorders of any group and are also the most common users of drugs.

The main drugs that affect mental health are cannabis and alcohol and the major mental health issues that affect mental health are depression and anxiety. There is a smaller proportion of the population that use heroin, amphetamines and other drugs including prescription drugs.

Psychosis among regular methamphetamine (also known as ICE) users is not restricted to those who have a history of mental health issues and is eleven times more likely than among the general population. Two thirds of methamphetamine users in Sydney in 2005 experienced some degree of mental disability. While aggression is a well known symptom of methamphetamine use, other mental illness problems are common, such as depression, impaired memory, and poor motivation.

Because alcohol and cannabis are readily available and socially acceptable, young people with mental health issues are particularly vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviours, develop a major mental illness and to suicide.

The prevalence of harm caused by co-occurring tobacco use and mental health issues is often under-emphasised, as having a mental health issue reduces the likelihood of an individual successfully quitting smoking. Smoking is linked to the four leading causes of preventable death in Australia, therefore this is an important health issue.

There is also evidence that regular cannabis use has been linked to the development of dormant or pre-existing mental health problems and even psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia.

Young people with mental health disorders can have symptoms and behaviours which can impair their ability to study, work and relationships. It can impair their access to

physical care, income education, housing, transport, legal advice and leisure opportunities.

The link between alcohol and drug misuse and the development of mental illness is as alarming as it is clear. Research indicates that nearly two thirds of people who suffer from a mental disorder have never sought any professional help.

DIRECTIONS ACT provides a free and confidential counselling service for young people at Woden and crisis counselling in the City, at the Health Centre, from 9-5 Monday to Friday. Phone 6122 8000 for more info.

We provide a number of fact sheets on our website and counsellors facilitate a number of support groups in Woden for people manage their substance use and mental health issues.

For more info visit:

Beyondblue: The national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au

Mental Health and Young People
www.headroom.net.au

Headspace, National Youth Mental Health Foundation
www.headspace.org.au

Inspire Foundation
www.reachout.com.au

Junction Youth Health Service
www.thejunction.org.au





Headspace provides mental health and wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia.

Established and funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia in 2006, headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The people that work at headspace are providing solutions for young people aged 12 to 25 years.

The primary focus is the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians, with the knowledge that getting help early is the key to resolving problems quickly.

With 30 one-stop-shops, headspace has a range of youth friendly health professionals who can help you with:

- General health
- Mental health and counselling
- Education, employment and other services
- Alcohol and other drug services.

Headspace is making a difference where it is needed most - our young people.

The DIRECTIONS ACT involvement with headspace is providing in reach services for clients whom wish to see a Drug and Alcohol Counsellor, A Staff member goes to the headspace location fortnightly and sees 3 clients.

The headspace facility in Canberra is located on the grounds of the University Of Canberra (UC).

Headspace
Faculty of Health
University of Canberra
Building 12, Level B, Room 40
Bruce ACT 2601

www.headspace.org.au

Youth Services in the ACT

Peak Body:

Youth Coalition of the ACT 6247 3540

The Junction Youth Health Service

PO Box 287 Civic Square ACT 2608

Ph 6232 2423 Fax 6232 2424

www.thejunction.org.au

junctioninfo@anglicarecg.org.au

Aboriginal Health Services

Winnunga Nimmityjah 6284 6222

Alcohol and Other Drug Services:

DIRECTIONS ACT Youth Counselling 6122 8000

Oasis Bridge Program 6248 7191

Ted Noffs Foundation ACT 6123 2400

Legal:

Youth Law ACT 6262 7077

Youth Centres:

Communities@Work

Tuggeranong Youth Centre 6126 9059

Communities@Work

Weston Creek Youth Centre 6126 9059

Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Centre 6231 9555

Gungahlin Youth Services 6123 4411

Queanbeyan Youth Services

(Axis Youth Centre) 6297 2958

U – Turn Youth Services

Belconnen 6264 0260

Woden Youth Centre 6282 3037

Youth In the City 6232 2444

YWCA Mura Lanyon Youth Centre 6294 4633

Party Safe

Another year has ticked over and finally and sadly the Party Safe Program is no longer funded. Due to the success of Party Safe, in February we were able to extend the length of the program. This was good news for both DIRECTIONS and for the ACT community. This also means that in April the Party Safe program turned two years old!

The goals of the Party Safe program was to reduce risk taking behaviours associated with alcohol and other drugs – in particular targeting young party-goers. This has been achieved through making contact with young people in the community. Party Safe went schools, youth centres and community events where young people gathered. Here we gave out guidance and information about safe partying. This included distributing

free safe sex packs, and referring young people to the many services available to them.

The last couple of months have been quite busy for the Party Safe program. School is back in so there have been a number of school O-weeks, fairs and carnivals to attend across Canberra. The Party Safe program has had a presence at events for Canberra College, CIT, University of Canberra, Lake Ginninderra College, Radford College, as well as at other community events such as Skyfire and the Canberra Show.

We would like to thank all of the schools and events organisers that we have worked with, because they have been a great aid in spreading our message of safe partying.

For Youth Week the Party Safe Bus attended expos in Garema Place and Gungahlin Skate Park, Bimbiri Youth Day and the homeless Street Soccer tournament. We also appeared at many events during the Sexual Health and Guidance Week.

The Party Safe program has been incorporated into the Community Health Promotion program and continues to attend events by request.

If you would like the Party Safe Bus to attend an event, contact DIRECTIONS ACT on 6122 8000.



Staff Profile

Name (nicknames):

Julie, Jules, Slipper, Foxy Lady etc...

What do you like best about your job?

Lots of contact with an eclectic range of people.

Position and Program:

DIRECTIONS ACT Reception

What would you do if you didn't work here?

Sleep in!

What is your role at DIRECTIONS ACT?

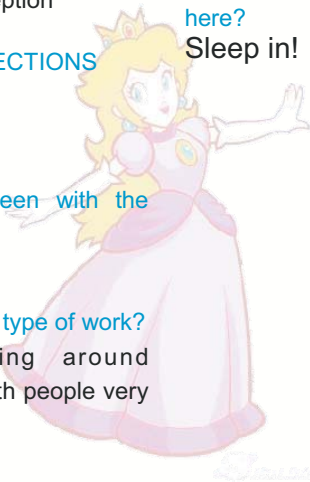
Receptionist

How long have you been with the organisation?

18 months

Why did you choose this type of work?

I really enjoy being around people. I find working with people very rewarding.



Drug Action Week 19 - 25 June

Drug Action Week (DAW) is a week of activities held nationally to raise awareness about alcohol and other drugs (AOD) issues in Australia. The week also highlights the achievements of the dedicated individuals who work within the AOD sector to reduce alcohol and drug related harm.

DAW 2011 is an initiative of the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing providing individuals, organisations, and communities with the opportunity to promote awareness of alcohol and other drugs.

A range of strong supporting themes were developed for Drug Action Week 2011 (DAW) and compliment the overarching theme of **"Looking After YOUR Mind!"**.

The DIRECTIONS ACT Community Health Promotion (CHP) team worked hard during the week attending 13 events. These included the Launch at the legislative assembly, the run roll or walk around Lake Burley Griffin, Youth Centres, Canberra College and Southside CIT. Activities included BBQs, alcohol and other drug trivia and beer goggle basketball.

During the week the CHP team were able to make over 750 unique contacts and distributed over 450 DIRECTIONS ACT resources.

Monday 20: **Don't Mix Alcohol and other Drugs.**

Tuesday 21: **Change the Drinking Culture of Young Australians.**

Wednesday 22: **Country Communities 'At Risk' from AOD**

Thursday 23 June: **Improve Healthcare Arrangements for Indigenous Communities**

Friday 24 June: **Invest in AOD Prevention to Reduce Treatment Needs.**

Pictures taken from Party Safe Promotion at Canberra College



Staff Profile

Name:

Annemarie

'Naturally I finished my set'

Jimenez

Position and Program/s:

Community Health promotion

AOD support worker

What is your role at DIRECTIONS ACT?

I travel around the community and promote, educate and engage with various organisations informing them on the harms and risks of alcohol and various drugs.

How long have you been with the organisation?

6 Months.

Why did you choose this type of work?

The work chose me

What do you like best about your job?

There hasn't been one day that has been the same there is always something new and exciting going on.

What would you do if you didn't work here?

Probably on my 8th repetition of a 165 kg bench press, which is quite a lot of weight.



Youth Counselling Case Study

A young man presented to counselling and support regarding the impact that his drinking and his cannabis use has had on his life over the past few years. He stated that since he was 12 he has been smoking cannabis on a daily basis and binge drinking quite frequently since the age of 14. He stated that he is currently smoking around 1 ounce of cannabis per week and is drinking anywhere from half – full bottle of bourbon 2 -3 nights per week. This client stated that he occasionally has feelings of anxiety when he is not intoxicated and has been feeling very low for the past few years. This young man also stated that he is aware that he has a lot of things going on in his mind from what he experienced when he was young but did not wish to discuss at the present time. He referred to these rushing thoughts as “head miles”.

The young man stated that he has managed to keep his job for the past 6 months however he is concerned that his addictions will begin to have an even bigger impact on his employment as it has already affected other areas of his life. He stated that he has a good support base through his family and through a couple of really close friends. He stated that he feels that he has wasted too much of his life by “choofing and boozing” which he feels has resulted in his teenage years being 1 big blur. After completing a PsyCheck screening tool which screens for anxiety, depression and for suicidal ideation it became apparent that he has a number of significant symptoms. The client registered a reasonably high score on the screening tool. However he stated that suicide and

self harm have never been a problem for him.

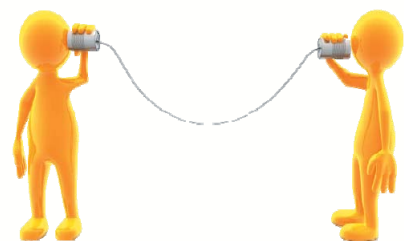
We wrote up a treatment support plan which would be reviewed each session and discussed the benefits of him making the choices for the goals he wishes to reach. This plan consisted of him cutting down his cannabis down and keeping a cannabis diary (documenting how much he smokes, when he smokes, and feelings and thoughts when he experiences any urges or temptations), reducing his alcohol use, and to actively delay and distract himself before giving in to his urges and utilise his supports when necessary.

Over the next few sessions he appeared to be doing extremely well and had managed to cease his cannabis use altogether. He stated that his alcohol consumption had been reduced down to two occasions a week: he only drinks socially now. He stated that he was still feeling the occasional craving to smoke cannabis however his new lifestyle choice seemed to be working really well for him. He stated that he had forgotten how fun life can be without blurring it out with drugs and alcohol. He stated that his new routine is filled with lots of exciting new things like a number of indoor team sports with his friends which included indoor soccer, indoor cricket, mixed netball and Oz tag. He stated that he now feels more confident and his depressions appears to have lifted. He continued to experience his rushing thoughts and flash backs to when he was young.

A good rapport was built quite early in the therapeutic relationship with

this young man due to the close age bracket of counsellor and client. During one particular session he was quite emotional and stated that his sleep has been heavily disrupted due to his thought patterns and his “head miles”. He was in such a state that he began talking about his past. He stated that he has had too much death in his life for someone so young and began talking about the night his father committed suicide. The details were very graphic as he heard it take place. He stated that for years he had to be the one to support his mother and family which he feels never allowed him to grieve properly which he stated that once he actually started to feel anything he started smoking cannabis and binge drinking to blur it all out.

At this point I felt it was time to make a referral to an expert to help him around grief and loss, and working on his trauma. This young man has started ongoing therapy with a psychologist who he states is really helping him to cope better with the events of his past. He continues seeing me for counselling around his addictions on a regular basis. He stated that he is still cannabis free and is only drinking in a social fashion over the weekend. He stated that his next goal is to stop drinking completely and start looking towards his future and go back to school.



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www.directionsact.com
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Drug
Information
Referral
Education
Counselling
Treatment
Intervention
Options
NSP
Service

What's on this quarter?

A guide to events, support groups, meetings and other important dates in the DIRECTIONS ACT calendar

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

12:30pm - 1:30pm Mondays

Al-Anon

12:30pm - 2:00pm Tuesdays

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

1:00pm - 2:00pm Thursdays

SMART Recovery (Relapse recovery)

10:30am-12:00pm Tuesdays

5:30pm-7:00pm Tuesdays*

*Changing to Wednesday from September

10:30am-12pm Fridays

COMPASS (Family Support Group)

6:00pm-8:00pm every 2nd Tuesday*

*Changing to Wednesdays from September

\$2 Haircuts

1:30pm-4:30pm every 2nd Wednesday

Run, Roll or Walk with Reclink,

The Red Cross and DIRECTIONS ACT

10:45am-1:00pm (free lunch)

Last Thursday of the month from

Lake Burley Griffin (near the Carillion)

Healthy Food Healthy Me

The Healthy Food, Healthy Me program aims to assist people with substance use issues both by learning life skills and providing social connection, and distributing frozen nutritious food into the NSPs for uptake by clients who use these programs.

Many people with alcohol and drug use issues have not had the opportunity to

learn good nutrition outcomes due to social indicators of their lives.

The clients at the Needle and Syringe Program are some of the most marginalised in the community. Financially disadvantaged, often homeless, addicted to illicit substances and disenfranchised from families and social networks

these people have chronic and substantial health issues. Good nutrition, healthy lifestyles and exercise are understandably not a priority. The Healthy Food, Healthy Me program delivers nutritious food for these people through the program weekly through the NSPs at both Canberra City and Philip Health Centre.

Healthy Food Healthy Me Recipe - Chicken Cacciatore

Ingredients: (serves 6)

- 3 tbs olive oil
- 6 chicken drumsticks, trimmed of excess fat, skin on
- 6 chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat, skin on
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 celery sticks, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled, chopped
- 150g sliced pancetta, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 125g button mushrooms, sliced
- 100ml dry white wine
- 800g can diced tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp brown sugar
- 1 tbs balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbs chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 bay leaf
- 150ml chicken stock
- 1 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- Chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a large casserole dish over medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces and cook until browned all over. Transfer to a plate and set aside. Add the onion, celery, carrot and to the pan and cook over low heat for 5 minutes until the onion softens. Add the garlic and mushrooms and cook for a further minute.
2. Return chicken pieces to the pan, allow to simmer 1-2 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes, vinegar, herbs and stock. Bring to the boil, then reduce heat to low and cook, covered, for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the olives and cook for a further 10 minutes.
4. Transfer chicken to a platter, then reduce the sauce over high heat for 5-6 minutes. Serve garnished with the parsley.

