

MONASH
ADDICTION
RESEARCH
CENTRE

2022-2023
ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023 SNAPSHOT



140 MEMBERS

MARC's membership has grown to 140 academics from across Monash making it one of the largest addiction research centres in the world.



184 PUBLICATIONS

Our members published 184 peer-reviewed journal articles in the field of addiction, with 77% published in Q1 journals.



OVER \$24M IN FUNDING

Our members received over \$24M in funding to complete addiction-based research.



156 MEDIA MENTIONS

MARC researchers appeared in the media more than 156 times, including across radio, TV, online & print media.

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ABOUT US

The Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) brings together world-leading expertise from across Monash University and the sector to provide solutions to the challenges of addiction.

We have 140 academic members across 30 departments in six faculties and two institutes, making us one of the largest addiction centres in the world.

Our mission is to provide national thought leadership, education, and research excellence to develop, deliver and evaluate effective policy and practice approaches for addiction. We work in partnership to achieve this by:

USING DATA FOR IMPACT

We generate and leverage multiple unique datasets, and provide timely and accessible insights to drive policy and practice change.

TRANSFORMING PRACTICE

We work to transform practice through co-designing, trialling and implementing novel evidence-based approaches. We work with community partners in the Frankston-Mornington Peninsula, those with lived experience of addiction, and other key stakeholders to develop local solutions that can be scaled nationally.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

We directly address stigma and community perceptions of addiction by bringing together multiple perspectives, including lived experience, through thought leadership, expert commentary and evidence dissemination.

ENABLING THE WORKFORCE

We build the expertise of individuals working in addiction and other frontline workforces, and the capacity of the treatment sector more broadly. We achieve this through development and delivery of short courses, embedded addiction curricula and work-integrated learning opportunities. We work with government partners to deliver effective reforms in addiction and mental health care.

OUR AIM

MARC is dedicated to finding solutions that transform the way we think about and respond to addiction.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

We are pleased to present the Monash Addiction Research Centre's Annual Report for 2022-2023

We are pleased to present the Monash Addiction Research Centre's Annual Report for 2022-2023. This financial year has seen significant progress and expansion of the Centre's work and influence.

Throughout the year, MARC hosted several impactful events, including the well-attended annual MARC Symposium, which brought together over 100 attendees. The event featured a well-received keynote presentation from Dr Annie Madden AO who reflected on 30 years of representing people who use drugs in developing drug policy and a panel discussion on 'Human rights, drug law reform and the international landscape'. The Symposium provided a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and fostering connections within the addiction research community.

In late 2022, we concluded our policy webinar series with a panel discussion on the past, present, and future of drug checking, monitoring, and early warning systems in Australia. In March 2023, we partnered with Turning Point to host a webinar on research impact creation and pathways delivered by Dr Wade Kelly (Director, Research Excellence and Impact at Monash University).

Our commitment to professional development continued with a science communication series and grant writing workshop tailored for our Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs). Our network of talented PhD students continued to expand and excel; in late 2022, we welcomed a new chair, Dylan Mantinieks and vice-chair, Jie Yang. Our first MARC PhD scholar, who graduated in late 2022, Dr Louisa Picco, was awarded a prestigious 2023 NHMRC Emerging Leaders Investigators Grant for her project on optimising the

investment in real-time prescription drug monitoring.

We are immensely proud of our dedicated researchers, who secured over \$24 million in funding and published 184 peer-reviewed articles in the past financial year. This is an extraordinary achievement, and we congratulate all our members on an outstanding year.

MARC researchers have made waves in the media, with over 156 appearances across various platforms, including radio, TV, online, and print media. We have actively engaged with state and federal government inquiries through three policy submissions on critical issues such as stigma reduction, regulation of gambling and liquor, and Victorian gambling reforms. Additionally, MARC researchers provided evidence at parliamentary hearings and inquiries, furthering our commitment to shaping evidence-based policies.

These accomplishments, driven by the dedication of our members and core staff, reflect the collaborative spirit of our community. As we reflect on the past year's achievements, we are excited about the momentum we have built together.

On behalf of MARC, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our advisory board, theme leaders, members, research partners, and the community for their unwavering support. We look forward to another successful year in 2024.

PROFESSOR DAN LUBMAN AM

Director

PROFESSOR SUZANNE NIELSEN

Deputy Director

GOVERNANCE

Centre Director, Prof Dan Lubman AM, oversees the Centre's research and operations and plays a key role in the development of industry engagement activities.

Deputy Director, Prof Suzanne Nielsen is instrumental in the development of research collaborations and plays a critical role in the strategic development of key initiatives in the Frankston-Mornington Peninsula region. Other core staff include members of the strategy and business operations team.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT / SENIOR LEADERSHIP



PROFESSOR DAN LUBMAN AM
Director



PROFESSOR SUZANNE NIELSEN
Deputy Director

STRATEGY AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS



KRISTA CRAWFORD
Research Program Officer



KELLIE RUDLIN
Senior Communications Adviser



JONATHAN MEDDINGS
Policy and Engagement Manager

RESEARCH STAFF



DR TINA LAM
Senior Research Fellow



DR BOSCO ROWLAND
Statistician and Senior Research Fellow



DR LOUISA PICCO
Research Fellow



DR TING XIA
Research Fellow



DR LEANNE FRANCIA
Research Officer



DR ALI CHEETHAM
Research Officer



ALEX SHIPTON
Research Assistant

MARC THEME LEADERS

MARC's theme leader group takes on the collective responsibility for informing the strategic direction of MARC and sharing information relating to MARC activities and opportunities. Theme leaders represent each of the three research themes within MARC, acting as a conduit for information between MARC and the departments and faculties in which they are based.

SCIENCE



PROF ANTONIO VERDEJO-GARCIA
Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health



A/PROF JENNIFER SCHUMANN
Department of Forensic Medicine



DR JENNI ILOMAKI
Centre for Medicine Use Safety



DR AILI LANGFORD
Centre for Medicine Use and Safety

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT



PROF PAUL DIETZE
Burnet Institute



PROF ARON SHLONSKY
Department of Social Work



PROF VICTORIA MANNING
Turning Point



A/PROF SHALINI ARUNOGIRI
Turning Point



DR TINA LAM
Monash Addiction Research Centre



A/PROF DEBBIE SCOTT
Turning Point



DR LIZ STURGISS
Department of General Practice

CULTURE AND POLICY



PROF PHILIP MENDES
Department of Social Work



PROF DENNIS PETRIE
Centre for Health Economics



A/PROF SONJA DE NEW
Centre for Health Economics



DR ROWAN OGEIL
Turning Point



DR MICHAEL SAVIC
Turning Point

MARC ADVISORY BOARD

MARC's external Advisory Board comprises representatives from a broad range of key stakeholders and partners who bring together a wealth of leadership and expertise. The board assists MARC in its mission to provide national solutions to the problems of addiction by increasing the visibility of the Centre across the community and supporting the work of our members.

CHAIR



Mietta Gibson has a commerce degree from Deakin University and has had a successful career in Human Resources for companies such as Daimler, Fiat Chrysler, World Vision and MYOB. In recent years, Mietta has been working as a consultant along with leaders and teams at a variety of organisations to create positive and inspiring workplaces.

Ms Gibson has been fortunate to have been involved with the Gibson Family foundation, a small foundation interested in creating impact in areas such as mental health. She coordinated support from the foundation to Turning Point and MARC to create video stories documenting the lived experience of people with addiction.

Being chair of the MARC Advisory Board is a great opportunity for Mietta to combine her professional experience, her lived experience of having a family member with addiction and mental health issues, and to represent her Mornington Peninsula community.

BOARD MEMBERS

SIMONE CORIN

Executive Director, Children and Families Division, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

NICOLA REINDERS

Executive Director: Quality and Patient Experience, Ambulance Victoria

DR ALISON DWYER

Executive Director, Research (Chief Medical Officer), Eastern Health

SAM BIONDO

Executive Officer, Victorian Alcohol and Drugs Association

AC GLENN WEIR

Assistant Commissioner, Road Policing Command, Victoria Police

PROFESSOR KIM CORNISH (SIR JOHN MONASH DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR)

Director, Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health

CHRISTOPHER CARTER

CEO, North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN)

FELICITY TOPP

CEO, Peninsula Health

CLARE DAVIES

CEO, Self Help Addiction Resource Centre

PROFESSOR DAVID COPOLOV AO

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Major Campuses and Student Engagement), Monash University

ROD MACKINTOSH

Executive Officer, Frankston Mornington Peninsula Primary Care Partnership

NICOLE LYNCH

Executive Director, Strategy & Policy, Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, Department of Health

ELEANOR WILLIAMS

Executive Director, Strategy & Policy, Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, Department of Health

FUNDING SUCCESS

MARC researchers have been awarded more than \$24 million in research funding to conduct research relating to addiction, substance use and related behaviours. The examples below of funding success demonstrate the strength of interdisciplinary collaboration amongst our members.

DETERMINING HEALTH NEEDS AND OUTCOMES OF KEY POPULATIONS OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Investigators: Prof Paul Dietze, Prof Lisa Maher, Prof Matthew Hickman, Prof Thomas Kerr, **Prof Mark Stoové, A/Prof Joseph Doyle, A/Prof Bernadette Ward, Jocelyn Jones, A/Prof Paul Agius, A/Prof James Trauer**

Injection drug use and methamphetamine smoking account for the majority of illicit drug-related harms and associated health care costs in Australia. This project will establish the Methamphetamine and Injecting Drug Use Cohort Study (MIXMAX) to produce new evidence on the nature and extent of these harms and the effectiveness of interventions to address them. MIXMAX combines the existing SuperMIX cohort of people who inject drugs (established 2008, N=1328) with the VMAX cohort of people who smoke methamphetamine (established 2016, N=854) to generate the largest active cohort of people who use drugs in Australia, providing a harmonised platform for data analysis to answer key questions in relation to drug-related harms and interventions to mitigate them.

The project is funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies grant.

This project is a collaboration between Burnet Institute, University of New South Wales, University Bristol, University of British Columbia, Department of Infectious Diseases, School of Rural Health, Biostatistics, Data Analytics/Modelling and Health Economics, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Deakin University.

DEEP END LIVING LAB: BETTER SUPPORT FOR AGEING IN HOMELESS POPULATIONS

Investigators: A/Prof Liz Sturgiss, Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Prof Helen Skouteris, **Prof Terry Haines**, Dr David Blane, **Prof Philip Mendes**, Dr Claire Blewitt, Dr Taya Collyer, Iain Edwards, Alice Urban, and **Nilakshi Gunatillaka**.

People who are homeless have less opportunity to age healthily. They have much lower life expectancy and greater rates of chronic disease than the rest of the community. They also face numerous challenges with accessing consistent healthcare, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

This study aims to improve frontline health care workers' capacity to discuss housing issues with patients, and to link patients with housing and material aid supports in their local area. As part of this work, we will: develop a marker for homelessness for use in routine health care records using the Healthy Ageing Data Platform, illustrate the health care journeys of people with lived experience of homelessness, and co-design solutions to improve their ageing and health experience.

This project is funded by the National Centre for Healthy Ageing (NCHA).

This project is a collaboration between the NCHA, Monash University, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Eastern Health Clinical School, Peninsula Health, and the University of Glasgow.

A RANDOMISED, DOUBLE-BLIND, CONTROLLED TRIAL OF MDMA-ASSISTED EXPOSURE THERAPY FOR ALCOHOL USE DISORDER AND COMORBID POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Investigators: Prof Kirsten Morley, Prof Katherine Mills, Prof Paul Haber, **Prof Dan Lubman**, Prof Maree Teesson, **A/Prof Shalini Arunogiri**, Prof Andrew Baillie, Dr Yong Yi Lee, Dr Alyssa Morse, A/Prof Sudie Back, **Dr Paul Likhaitzky**.

There is a high rate of comorbidity between alcohol use disorders and post traumatic stress disorder which is associated with greater clinical impairment, poorer prognosis and greater treatment attrition. This trial will be an internationally unique study which will examine the efficacy of MDMA-assisted therapy to treat concurrent alcohol use disorder and post traumatic stress disorder. This study will generate high level efficacy and cost-efficacy data for these life-threatening problems.

This project is funded by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

This project is a collaboration between Monash Addiction Research Centre, Eastern Health Clinical School, SPHPM Health Economics Group, and Psychiatry Monash Health.

BEYOND 50 - HEALTH AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES IN FRANKSTON AND THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA: A COHORT TO INFORM MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER PREVENTION

Investigators: **Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Dr Tina Lam, Dr Aislinn Lalor, Dr Nadine Andrew, Prof Paul Dietze**, Dr Brett Coulson, **A/Prof Shalini Arunogiri**, Dr Stephen Bright, **Prof Keith Hill**, Kirsty Morgan, **Dr Laura Alfrey, Dr Leanne Francia**

Australia's large 'baby boomer' cohort have riskier drinking patterns than previous generations, and older adults experience unique risk factors for developing anxiety and depression with more than half of cases of depression beginning in later life. This will create new challenges for healthcare delivery and healthy ageing.

This project will develop an enriched cohort of older Australians and follow them through high risk transition periods to, for the first time, enable a detailed understanding of risk factors for developing anxiety, depression and substance use disorders during these higher-risk periods. This enriched cohort of older Australians will examine social connection, mental health and substance use disorders during high-risk periods (e.g. transition to retirement) to inform prevention strategies and support healthier ageing.

This project is funded by The National Centre for Healthy Ageing and the Ian Potter Foundation.

This project is a collaboration between Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Occupational Therapy, Peninsula Clinical School, Evidence Synthesis Qualitative Implementation Methods, School of Primary and Allied Health Care, School of Curriculum Teaching & Inclusive Education.

INTEGRATING ALCOHOL CULTURE CHANGE INTO OLDER ADULTS' POSITIVE AGEING

Investigators: **Dr Tina Lam, Dr Michael Savic, Dr Aislinn Lalor, A/Prof Liz Sturgiss, Dr Laura Alfrey, Dr Leanne Francia, Peta Stragalinos, Kellie Rudlin, Alex Shipton, Prof Suzanne Nielsen,** and **Prof Keith Hill.**

Australians in their 50's, 60's and 70's are drinking more compared to previous generations at the same age and compared to today's younger people. Despite alcohol's contribution to a range of diseases such as cancer and dementia, many conventional health promotion messages around alcohol don't resonate with audiences.

Our new approach will share people's vibrant and multidimensional stories around their alcohol use through a series of short videos. Our story-focused health campaign will centre around why people drink, and how changing their relationship with alcohol can lead to positive changes in their social lives, the ways they relax, and set them up for healthier ageing.

This project is funded by the National Centre for Healthy Ageing (NCHA).

This project is a collaboration between Monash Addiction Research Centre, Turning Point, the Department of General Practice, Rehabilitation Ageing and Independent Living, Eastern Health Clinical School, and the School of Primary and Allied Health.

OPTIMISING THE INVESTMENT IN REAL-TIME PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING

Investigators: **Dr Louisa Picco**

Various jurisdictions across Australia are currently implementing prescription drug monitoring programs, a supply-side policy to address opioid related harms. Yet despite their wide adoption, there is inconclusive international evidence of the effectiveness of these programs. This research will address a substantial research gap in Australia and will deliver crucial knowledge on how to maximise the investments in prescription drug monitoring programs, while minimising harms.

This project is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Emerging Leaders Investigator Grant scheme.

USING AMBULANCE DATA TO CREATE A CONTEMPORARY MODEL OF ALCOHOL-RELATED HARMS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Investigators: **Dr Rowan Ogeil, Prof Dan Lubman, Dr Ziad Nehme**, Kinjal Majumdar. Partners: Louise Tierney, Tom Lyons and A/Prof Tony Walker.

This project seeks to increase our understanding of the impact of public holidays, large public events, and festivals on alcohol-related harms requiring an ambulance attendance.

Using ambulance data from the National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS), and novel mapping technology, this research will identify both times, and geographic 'hotspot' areas of alcohol availability and harm across Victoria (both metro and regional areas), in relation to public holidays as well as sporting and cultural events. It will also examine the type(s) of harm related to alcohol for different population groups across Victoria- such as age and gender, and involves a significant co-design element with local governments, in order to help inform their local alcohol action plans going forward.

This project is funded by VicHealth.

This project is a collaboration between the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Victorian Department of Health, Ambulance Victoria, Turning Point, the Monash Addiction Research Centre, and Eastern Health Clinical School.



Left to right: Sarah Chislett, Dr Rowan Ogeil and Kinjal Majumdar

EXPERIENCES OF DRUG DRIVING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Investigators: **Dr Michael Savic, Dr Tristan Duncan & Prof Victoria Manning**

Drug driving is a major public health and safety issue. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study aims to understand the perceptions, knowledge, and experiences of people who drug drive to inform approaches and responses to drug driving. It is anticipated that the interviews will reveal ways to minimise drug-driving and associated harms, as well as identifying suggestions for improved responses and supports for people who drug drive.

This project is funded by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

COMPLETED RESEARCH

Below are some highlights of the addiction-related research that involved MARC members as collaborators in the 2022/2023 year.

HEALTH4HER: PREVENTING HARM FROM ALCOHOL IN WOMEN ATTENDING BREAST SCREENING SERVICES

Investigators: Dr Jasmin Grigg, Prof Dan Lubman, Dr Alex Waddell, Dr Christopher Greenwood, Prof Robin Bell, Ms Peta Stragalinis, Ms Charlotte Sutton, Prof Victoria Manning, Dr Darren Lockie, Prof Liam Smith, Prof Peter Bragge & Ms Michelle Clemson

Alcohol is a major modifiable risk factor for breast cancer in women, even in very low amounts, yet awareness of this risk remains low. In two hybrid effectiveness-implementation trials, we evaluated a co-designed alcohol and lifestyle brief digital intervention for women attending breast screening services. We found high acceptability of Health4Her among women and service staff, evidence of effectiveness in increasing women's alcohol and breast cancer literacy, evidence of reduced drinking intentions, and preliminary evidence of reduced drinking frequency.

Publications: Grigg, J, Manning, V, Lockie, D, Giles, M, Bell, R, Stragalinis, P, Bernard, C, Greenwood, C, Volpe, I, Smith, L, Bragge, P & Lubman, D. (2023). A brief intervention for improving alcohol literacy and reducing harmful alcohol use by women attending a breast screening service: a randomised controlled trial. *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(11); 511-519. DOI:10.5694/mja2.51991

Grigg, J, Manning, V, Cheetham, A, Greenwood, CJ, Youssef, G, Lockie, D, Bell, R, Stragalinis, P, Bernard, C & Lubman, D. (2023). Risky alcohol consumption among women in Australia attending breast screening services: an exploratory cross-sectional study. *Addiction*, 118(8); 1493-1506. DOI: 10.1111/add.16191

Grigg, J, Manning, V, Lockie, D, Giles, M, Bell, R, Stragalinis, P, Bernard, C, Volpe, I, Greenwood, CJ, Smith, L, Bragge, P, Lubman, DI. (2023). A Brief Intervention for Improving Alcohol Literacy and Addressing Harmful Alcohol Use Among Women Attending an Australian Breast Screening Service (Health4her): Protocol for a Hybrid Effectiveness-Implementation Trial *JMIR Res Protoc*, (12):e44867. doi: 10.2196/44867

These projects were funded by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, the Eastern Health Foundation, and Shades of Pink.

This project has involved collaborations between Turning Point, Eastern Health, Eastern Health Clinical School, MARC, Action Lab, BehaviourWorks Australia, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre's Lifepool, and BreastScreen Victoria.



DETERMINING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ON PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Investigators: Prof Paul Dietze, Prof Lisa Maher, Prof Matthew Hickman, **A/Prof Joseph Doyle, Prof Mark Stoove**, A/ Prof Bernadette Ward, Dr Keith Sutton, Dr Anna Wilkinson, Dr Brendan Quinn.

Most published work on the impacts of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use relies on information collected from cross-sectional studies of convenience samples of people who use drugs. In this study, we used the SuperMIX and VMAX cohort studies of people who inject drugs and people who smoke methamphetamine to determine the impacts of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and harm in Victoria. The project also sampled key cohort members who had experienced impacts of lockdowns and associated restrictions for in-depth qualitative interviews about the effects of these restrictions on their lives. Preliminary analyses showed major impacts on drug prices that correspond with reductions in use during the extended lockdown in Melbourne in 2020.

This project was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

Publications: Rathnayake, K, Agius, P, Ward, B, Hickman, M, Maher, L, **Stoové, M, Doyle, JS**, Hellard, M, Wilkinson, A, Quinn, B, Crawford, S, Sutton, K & **Dietze, P**. (2023). The impacts of COVID-19 measures on drug markets and drug use among a cohort of people who use methamphetamine in Victoria, Australia. *Addiction*, 118(8); 1557-1568. DOI: 10.1111/add.16189

Walker, S, **Dietze, P, Higgs, P**, Ward, B, Treloar, C, **Stoové, M, Rathnayake, K, Doyle, J**, Hellard, M & Maher, L. (2023). Socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for people who use drugs. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 58, 907–925. DOI: 10.1002/ajs4.289

A PRACTICAL REVIEW OF MEDICAL CANNABIS FOR WORKPLACE INJURIES

Investigators: Dr Paul Kellner, Prof Peter Bragge, Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Veronica Delafosse, Diki Tsering, Alyse Lennox, **Dr Alex Waddell**.

WorkSafe Australia commissioned an update of a previous review conducted by WorkSafe Victoria, which examined the use of medical cannabinoids for treating chronic pain, opioid-sparing effects, mental health disorders, nausea, and sleep disorders. Despite significant consumer and clinical interest, few high-quality trials have demonstrated the efficacy or safety of medical cannabis, and existing reviews often offer conflicting recommendations. Prominent organisations, such as the Australia and New Zealand Faculty of Pain Medicine and the International Association for the Study of Pain, currently recommend limiting the use of medical cannabis to clinical trials. However, with ongoing research, including 15 clinical trials identified in December 2020, these recommendations and policies may evolve as new evidence becomes available. The review also identified moderate to high-quality studies reporting adverse events, such as increased susceptibility to substance abuse disorder, a 'hangover effect,' reduced lung capacity (from inhaled use), and cannabis use disorder.

This project was funded by the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA).

Publications: Nielsen, S, Tsering, D, **Waddell, A**, Grundy, E, Lennox, A, **Bragge, P**, Delafosse, V, **Kellner, P**. Medicinal Cannabis Evidence and Practice Review. Monash Sustainable Development Institute Evidence Review Service, BehaviourWorks Australia, Monash University, August 2022.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF RESIDENTIAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT FACILITIES: AN EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT RAPID REVIEW

Investigators: Prof Peter Bragge, Veronica Delafosse, Dr Ngo Cong-Lem, Diki Tsering & Prof Suzanne Nielsen.

Residential rehabilitation for alcohol and other drug dependence aims to provide a structured environment for people to break addiction and reintegrate into society within a community rather than in outpatient or other settings. However, whilst moderate quality evidence exists supporting this approach, disapproving responses are often observed in communities where such facilities are planned or established.

The review findings raise a number of important considerations. First, initial community concerns are not based on lived experience of residential rehabilitation in their area and appear to diminish once the centres are established. This is consistent with other research that social contact is effective in reducing stigma. Education is also a proven intervention for reducing stigma – however this need to be delivered thoughtfully; large town-hall style forums are potentially counterproductive as they give a platform to strong opponents, whereas visits to neighbours and / or invitations to smaller groups to visit rehabilitation centres may be more effective. A number of gaps in the evidence - including a dearth of studies; lack of exploration of community knowledge; and potential undermeasurement of complex outcomes such as community attitudes and sentiment – should be borne in mind when interpreting review findings.

This project was funded by the Sax Institute for the NSW Ministry of Health.

This project was a collaboration between the Monash Sustainable Development Institute Review Service & the Monash Addiction Research Centre, Eastern Health Clinical School.

Publications: Bragge, P, Delafosse, V, Cong-Lem, N, Tsering, D and Nielsen, S. Community impacts of residential alcohol and drug treatment facilities: an Evidence Snapshot rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute (www.saxinstitute.org.au) for the NSW Ministry of Health, 2023.

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF GROUP-BASED EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES COPING WITH ADDICTION

Investigators: Mr Robert Campbell, Dr Annette Peart, Prof Victoria Manning, Prof Dan Lubman

Delivered across Victoria since 2015 and online since 2020, to over 5,000 participants to date (including those in regional/rural locations), the BreakThrough program helps family members to better understand drug use, improve communication and wellbeing, and access appropriate support networks. BreakThrough offers practical strategies and support, and provides an opportunity for family members to connect and learn from each other.

This project evaluated the effectiveness of the BreakThrough program in improving family members' skills and confidence in coping and responding to a relative with addiction, and knowing where to get further help and support as needed. In addition, the project explored whether actively linking BreakThrough participants to an online family peer support group provided an ongoing sense of connection, enhanced coping skills, improved wellbeing and family relationships, and improved access to information and support.

This project was funded by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF).

This project was a collaboration between the Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Turning Point and Eastern Health Clinical School.

Publications: Peart A, Horn F, and Lubman D. I. (2022). The experiences of affected family members and friends attending BreakThrough: Families Understanding Addiction. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 41(S1), s108-s109.

Peart, A, Horn, F, Grigg, J, Manning, V, Campbell, R, & Lubman, D.I. (2023). Online peer-led support program for affected family members of people living with addiction: A mixed methods study. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*.

Peart, A, Horn, F, Manning, V, Campbell, R, & Lubman, D.I. (2023). The experiences of family members attending an online addiction education program: A qualitative study. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 31(3), 310-317.

A TRIAL OF VAPORISED NICOTINE PRODUCTS FOR SMOKING CESSATION FOLLOWING DISCHARGE FROM DRUG AND ALCOHOL RESIDENTIAL WITHDRAWAL SERVICES

Investigators: Prof Billie Bonevski, Prof Amanda Baker, **Prof Victoria Manning**, Prof Coral Gartner, Prof Natalie Walker, Dr Catherine Segan, Prof Chris Bullen, A/Prof Christopher Oldmeadow, Prof Linda Bauld, Prof Adrian Dunlop, **Prof Dan Lubman**.

Compared to the general population, people undergoing alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment have far higher rates of tobacco use, experience more difficulty quitting tobacco, and are more likely to relapse after a quit attempt. Behavioural support and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) have been shown to help people remain abstinent from tobacco while in residential AOD treatment, however, most resume smoking after leaving residential treatment. The NEAT trial tested the effectiveness of Vaporised Nicotine Products (VNPs) and Quitline telephone counselling compared to NRT and Quitline counselling in helping clients cease smoking following discharge from residential withdrawal treatment in a large sample of 363 participants. The study ran across 6 residential and inpatient withdrawal units in three states (Qld, NSW, VIC). In this 12-week intervention, participants were randomly assigned to receive a VNP with a 12-week supply of nicotine and Quitline Support (condition 1), or a 12-week supply of NRT and Quitline Support (condition 2), when discharged from withdrawal treatment. Participants were contacted for 3-month and 9-month follow-up interviews following their discharge to assess tobacco abstinence and other outcomes.

This project was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Publications: Bonevski B, **Manning V**, Wynne, O., Gartner, C., Borland, R., Baker, L., Segan, C., Skelton, E., Moore, L., **Bathish, R.**, Chiu, S., Guillaumier, A., and **Lubman, D.** (2021) QuitNic: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial Comparing Nicotine Vaping Products With Nicotine Replacement Therapy for Smoking Cessation Following Residential Detoxification. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.

Bonevski, B, Rich, J, Jones, M, Skelton, E, **Garfield J**, Baker, A, Segan, C, Gartner, C, Walker, N, Borland, R, Daglish, M, Dunlop, A, Oldmeadow, C, Bauld, L, Bullen, C, Ezard, N, McCrohan, R, Jacka, D, White, S, **Lubman, D**, and **Manning, V.** (2022). Baseline findings from project neat: Nicotine as treatment for tobacco smoking. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 41(S2), S33-S34.

Bonevski, B, Rich, J, Skelton, E, Garfield, J, Baker, A, Segan, C, Gartner, C, Walker, N, Borland, R, Daglish, M, Dunlop, A, Oldmeadow, C, Bauld, L, Bullen, C, Ezard, N, McCrohan, R, Jacka, D, White, S, Lubman, D, and Manning, V. (2022). NEAT (NicotinE As Treatment) Trial: Protocol of a randomised controlled trial of vaporised nicotine products compared with nicotine replacement therapy following discharge from residential withdrawal services. *MedRxiv* 2022.05.15.22275118

POLICY AND ENGAGEMENT

It was another impactful year for MARC's policy team.

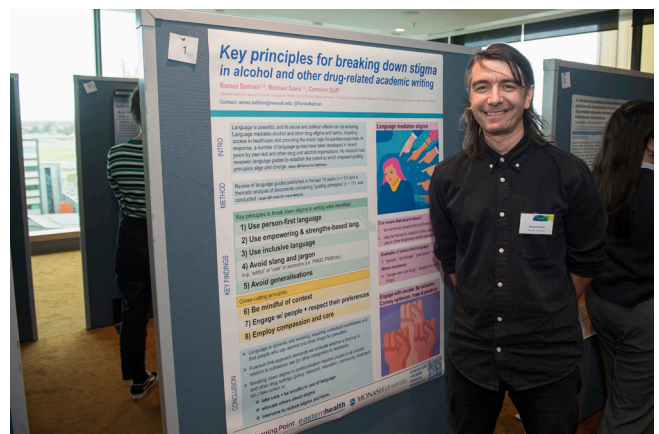
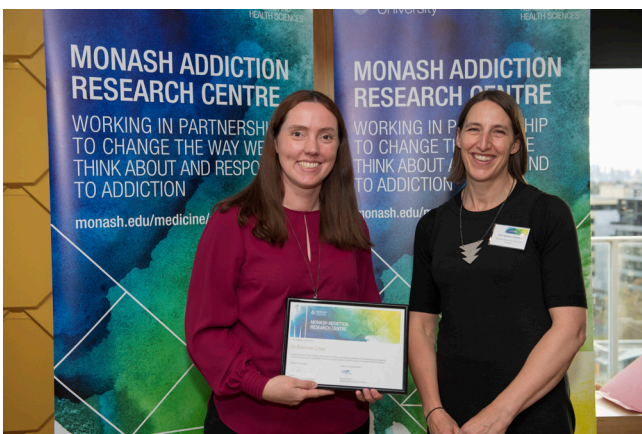
In November 2022, MARC made a submission to the federal inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm. MARC's Director, Professor Dan Lubman AM, gave evidence at the public hearing, with the final inquiry report making nine recommendations that aligned with those MARC advocated for.

After a submission to the federal inquiry into the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem, Professor Dan Lubman AM and MARC's Deputy Director Professor Suzanne Nielsen presented evidence at the public hearing. MARC's submission made nine recommendations and we now await the committee's report.

Everyone benefits when we leave no community members behind and support all Australians to thrive. MARC will continue to advocate for people living with addiction and their families so that they are supported through evidence-based, health-led responses, and their health and human rights are protected and promoted.



Highlights from the 2023 MARC Symposium, which took place on Thursday, 18 May, at The Pavilion, Caulfield campus



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

TRACKING THE ALARMING RISE IN STRANGE NEW ILLICIT DRUGS FLOODING AUSTRALIA – *MONASH LENS*

[A/Prof Jennifer Schumann](#)

Two years ago, in a field of forensic medicine known as “toxicosurveillance”, a group involving Monash University and Monash Health began taking samples of blood and other fluids from drug-overdose patients in emergency departments, to see what was there. **This was due to an alarming rise in novel drugs flooding into the illicit market in Australia.**

Many of these drugs are made in clandestine factories in countries such as China or India. They're often sold online in the first instance. Many, when taken in combination with other drugs or on their own, can be fatal. **They're often sold as substitutes for ecstasy, amphetamines, LSD, opioids, cannabis, and benzodiazepines such as Xanax.**

“The compounds are often referred to as research chemicals,” says Monash’s Associate Professor Jennifer Schumann, head of the drug intelligence unit at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM).

[Read more](#)



HOW DOES METHADONE WORK AS A HEROIN-REPLACEMENT THERAPY? AND WHAT ABOUT THE LONGER-ACTING BUPRENORPHINE? – THE CONVERSATION

Prof Suzanne Nielsen

Around 1% of Australian adults have tried heroin in their lifetime and 2.7% have used pharmaceutical opioids for non-medical purposes in the past 12 months.

Around one in three people who try heroin become dependent, and around one in five people who use opioids long-term for pain become dependent.

Research shows the most effective treatment for heroin dependence is to replace it with a similar but longer-acting opioid – such as methadone – in a controlled dose to reduce the need to use heroin. This is called “opioid agonist treatment”.

[Read more](#)

Read more thought leadership pieces from MARC members below.
'It's right to abolish the Cashless Debit Card, but what about the BasicsCard?' - Monash Lens, Prof Philip Mendes

'The magic mushroom experience: Taking psilocybin for science' - Monash Lens, A/Prof Adeel Razi, Devon Stoliker

'Pubs and clubs – your friendly neighbourhood money-laundering service, thanks to 86,640 pokies' -The Conversation, A/Prof Charles Livingstone

'TikTok's hosting of gambling ads underlines the pervasiveness of the problem' - Monash Lens, A/Prof Charles Livingstone

'Sport is being used to normalise gambling. We should treat the problem just like smoking' - The Conversation, A/Prof Charles Livingstone



MEDIA

MARC has continued its strong media presence across various media platforms with our members regularly providing expert public commentary to mainstream media outlets including *ABC News, ABC Radio, SBS News, The Guardian and The Age*

RADIO, PRINT AND ONLINE MEDIA

[Monash Lens – 4 July 2022](#)

Tracking the alarming rise in strange new illicit drugs flooding Australia

[Star Weekly – 07 July 2022](#)

Pokies concern despite spending decline

[The Brisbane Times – 23 July 2022](#)

Can microdosing boost creativity and wellbeing? Sorting fact from fantasy

[ABC's Four Corners – 25 July 2022](#)

The hope and hype of psychedelic therapy

[Monash News – 10 August 2022](#)

Gambling and Homelessness a growing problem amongst older Australians

[Sports Illustrated – 12 August 2022](#)

What Do Athletes Get From Ayahuasca, Mushrooms and Ecstasy?

[The Age – 13 August 2022](#)

Crown pokies crackdown expected to push problem gamblers to clubs, pubs

[ABC Radio Melbourne – 17 August 2022](#)

Drinking alcohol while working from home

[The Guardian – 23 August 2022](#)

Fentanyl seizure: experts warn potent drug could rapidly emerge as a problem in Australia

[Monash Lens – 29 August 2022](#)

It's right to abolish the Cashless Debit Card, but what about the BasicsCard?

[WA Today – 29 August 2022](#)

'A craving lasts for 15 minutes': Sober advice from alcohol coaches

[AJP.com.au – 2 September 2022](#)

Pharmacists can play a 'key role' in reducing overdose numbers

[ABC News – 16 September 2022](#)

Gambling limits for poker machines in Tasmania by 2024, but THA blasts move after Liberal election pledge

[Cosmos magazine – 30 September 2022](#)

What to do about opioids

[ABC News – 3 October 2022](#)

Thousands are waiting for drug and alcohol treatment. For Chloe, the long wait for help almost took her life

[Brisbane Times – 7 October 2022](#)

The gambling research organisation that gambling companies love

[Monash Lens – 10 October 2022](#)

The magic mushroom experience: Taking psilocybin for science

[Newsroom.com.nz – 22 October 2022](#)

Psychedelic drugs for science

[Croakey Health media – 26 October 2022](#)

A year on from the royal commission the odds have not improved for crown casino

[The Conversation – 28 October 2022](#)

Pubs and clubs – your friendly neighbourhood money-laundering service, thanks to 86,640 pokies

[Cosmos magazine – 5 November 2022](#)

Preparing for psychedelic therapies in Australia Psychedelic therapies have the potential to treat mental illness but there's still a long way to go.

[The Sunday Age – 6 November 2022](#)

Finger pointing at women doesn't work': Exposing the dangers of wine o'clock

[ABC RN Radio – 9 November 2022](#)

'It fundamentally changed the social fabric of NSW': How clubs got hooked on pokies

[Monash Lens – 9 November 2022](#)

TikTok's hosting of gambling ads underlines the pervasiveness of the problem

[Croakey Health Media – 14 November 2022](#)

Changing the conversation: please read and share this report from the Rethink Addiction convention

[The Guardian – 16 November 2022](#)

'I would have had my own house by now': the devastating effects of a life in thrall to the pokies

[ABC News – 22 November 2022](#)

Health advocates call for national response to tackle addiction

[Croakey Health Media – 22 November 2022](#)

Cost of addiction in Australia highlights urgent need for investment in drug reform

[2GB – 27 November 2022](#)

Cost of addiction to Australian economy

[MedicalXpress – 28 November 2022](#)

Newly released prisoners face greater risk of opioid overdose

[7News – 2 December 2022](#)

Surprise finding on lockdown opioid use

[AJP.com.au – 20 December 2022](#)

Wastewater shows codeine use plunge

[ABC News – 28 December 2022](#)

We've heard of 'dole bludgers' – why don't we hear about 'tax bludgers'?

[ABC News – 5 January 2023](#)

Chloe grew up in state care, then she had to fight to keep her own baby

[The Guardian – 02 January 2023](#)

NSW RSL clubs under fire from members for 'tone deaf' push back against gambling reforms

[The Conversation – 11 January 2023](#)

How does methadone work as a heroin-replacement therapy? And what about the longer-acting buprenorphine?

[Neos Kosmos – 4 February 2023](#)

Australia to reclassify MDMA and Psilocybin as medicine

[ABC News – 5 February 2023](#)

TGA psychedelics decision met with relief, cautious optimism and 'serious reservations'

[The Australian Financial Review – 13 February 2023](#)

What will happen if pokies go cashless?

[Monash Lens – 14 February 2023](#)

How to boost community and stakeholder support for the use of psychedelic medicines

[Retail Pharmacy – 16 February 2023](#)

WORLD-FIRST TRIAL TO INVESTIGATE NEW MEDICATION FOR METHAMPHETAMINE DEPENDENCE

[The Canberra Times – 17 February 2023](#)

Why partners could hamper smokers' attempts to quit

[The Age – 25 February 2023](#)

Blinded by the lights: How can we escape the pokies zone?

[ABC News – 23 February 2023](#)

Children leaving out-of-home care will soon get more support, but the old policy has left a stark legacy

[News.com.au – 28 February 2023](#)

Does the 'hype' on psychedelics match the reality when it comes to mental health?

[ABC News – 28 February 2023](#)

Online gambling industry regulation back in focus during inquiry's hearings

[Bloomberg – 13 March 2023](#)

Psychedelics Meet Up With Virtual Reality at South by Southwest

Joy FM – 14 March 2023

North Richmond Medically Supervised Injecting Room to Continue

ABC News – 21 March 2023

Online casinos based offshore are illegally targeting Australians on Facebook. Who is responsible?

The Age – 22 March 2023

'It's going to be for people with money': Psychedelic treatments tipped to cost at least \$25,000

9News – 4 April 2023

Australian workers keeping world turning after dark facing 'impossible' reality

RTE – 12 April 2023

Inside Ireland's widespread reliance on codeine medicines

ABC NEWS – 17 April 2023

Where Australia stands on drug decriminalisation

Pharmacy itk – 9 May 2023

Australia to ban vape sales by all retailers, except pharmacies

Joy FM – 13 May 2023

Fruit flavoured Vaping – Is it safe?

The Conversation – 19 May 2023

Sport is being used to normalise gambling. We should treat the problem just like smoking

VICE – 12 May 2023

Prisons have the highest concentration of hepatitis C in Australia, pushing our aim to eliminate the blood-borne virus by 2030 out of reach.

ABC Radio – 26 May 2023

Researchers say Australia needs to rethink its policy on opioid misuse

Retail Pharmacy – 30 May 2023

Dispelling the myths about e-cigarettes

Medical Xpress – 30 May 2023

Researchers develop alcohol intervention for women attending breast screening appointments

Pharmacy itk – 1 June 2023

Dispensing of psychotropic medications to Australian children and adolescents doubled in less than a decade

AusDoc – 9 June 2023

Opioid deaths: Is SafeScript a waste of GPs' time?

Croakey Health Media – 13 June 2023

To Tackle Australia's opioid overdose problem, learn from global solutions

The Medical Republic – 16 June 2023

Opioid dependence changes will take a leap of faith

ABC News Radio – 22 June 2023

Punters urged to dox in pokies venues

Pain news Network – 27 June 2023

Australian Guideline Calls for Safer Opioid Tapering

Washington post – 29 June 2023

Australia offers MDMA drug therapy for PTSD, a world first

The Conversation – 30 June 2023

Australia has a strong hand to tackle gambling harm. Will it go all in or fold?

OUR COLLABORATORS

Members of MARC collaborate with a diverse range of local, national and international research and clinical partners. The agencies listed below represent some of our key partnerships with research organisations, health services and community associations.

Alfred Health
Ambulance Victoria
Area 4 Pharmacotherapy Network
Association of Participating Service Users
Australian Institute of Family Studies
Australian National University
Australian Research Council
Barwon Health
Beyond Blue
Bouverie Centre
Burnet Institute
Cancer Council Victoria
Chisholm TAFE
Deakin University
Defence Health
Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
Department of Health, Commonwealth
Eastern Health
Eastern Health Foundation
Eastern Melbourne PHN
Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)
La Trobe University
Monash Health
Movember
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC),
University of New South Wales
National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), Curtin University
Nurses and Midwives Health Program Victoria
Penington Institute
Peninsula Health
Responding to Alcohol and Drugs in the Frankston and
Mornington Peninsula (RAD-FMP)
Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)
Sheffield Hallam University, UK
St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne
Turning Point
University of Melbourne
University of Newcastle
University of Oregon, USA
University of Queensland
University of Sydney
University of Tasmania
University of Wollongong
VicHealth
Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
Windana
World Health Organisation (WHO)
Youth Support + Advocacy Service (YSAS)

PUBLICATIONS

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