

4 October, 2000

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Parliament of Australia

**THE CARE & PREVENTION  
PROGRAMME**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
GENERAL PRACTICE

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Dear Secretary

I am writing on behalf of the Management Committee of this Programme to provide the following information to the inquiry into Substance Abuse in Australian Communities.

The Care & Prevention Programme is a general practice-based health care and health promotion programme for people with HIV infection and those who may be at increased risk. 423 people have enrolled in the Programme and over 90% of participants are gay and other homosexually-active men. The extensive health information we have gathered provides an insight into the unique health profile of this community which has not previously been available in Australia.

Our data show that gay and other homosexually-active men suffer health disadvantage in a wide range of areas compared with the general population and substance use is a particular area of concern.

We believe that it is vital that health promotion activities focused on substance issues in Australia recognise the importance of specific outreach to this significant minority who have particularly acute needs in this area.

Our data indicate that compared with Australian adult males generally, gay and other homosexually-active men from our cohort are:

- one and a half times as likely to smoke tobacco
- twice as likely to have an alcohol use disorder
- twice as likely to have used cannabis in the last year
- more than three times as likely to have used amphetamines
- eight times as likely to have ever injected drugs
- **no** more likely to use heroin currently

Major Depression is eight times more prevalent in our cohort than males in the general community, regardless of their HIV status. We have also identified an association between depression and the use of cannabis but not any other recreational drugs. Having said this, cannabis also appears to be used appropriately and therapeutically for its appetite-stimulating effect by many HIV positive people some of whom face significant legal problems as a result.

We would be delighted to provide any further information about the health of gay and other homosexually men that your Committee may require.

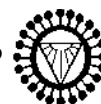
Sincerely



Gary Rogers MB, BS, Grad Cert GP

Psych  
Programme Director

THE SOUTH  
AUSTRALIAN  
PRIMARY &  
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HIV & RELATED  
DISEASES CARE  
& PREVENTION  
PROGRAMME



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