



# National Awareness Workshop

## Session 1:

# Alcohol and other drugs in Australian society and the workplace





# A common thread

[CASA 25 attachment B]

- Defence
- Law enforcement
- Professional and elite sport
- Roads
- Mining
- Railways
- Aviation



Alcohol and Other Drugs National Awareness Workshop



“For every complex problem there is always an answer that is clear, simple ... and wrong”



Henry Louis Mencken  
1880-1956



# Workplace Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) is a complex problem...

- Person
- Place
- Drug





# Workplace Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) in Australia

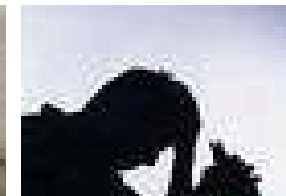
- The truth about alcohol and other drugs
- People and alcohol and other drugs
- Alcohol and other drug use and harm







# Stereotypes of AOD use





# National Awareness Workshop

- Question: Who uses alcohol and other drugs in the *workplace*?
- Answer: Who uses alcohol and other drugs in the *community*?





# Definitions

- DRUGS: Substances capable of causing dependence, altered mood, impaired judgment, concentration or coordination
- DEPENDENCE: Physical/psychological. Characterised by tolerance, withdrawal, increased salience, impaired control, use despite harm
- IMPAIRMENT: A state in which alertness, co-ordination and/ or ability to make rational judgements are diminished or inhibited by the effects of a drug







# Myth or Truth?

- Illegal drugs are the major problem in Australia
- The main problem with alcohol is “alcoholics”
- Treatment is a waste of time/money
- Testing on it's own will stop drug use in the workplace
- If you can get AOD dependent people into treatment, and they are sufficiently motivated, they will be cured
- One drink in the air is worth three on the ground





# AOD use in Australia

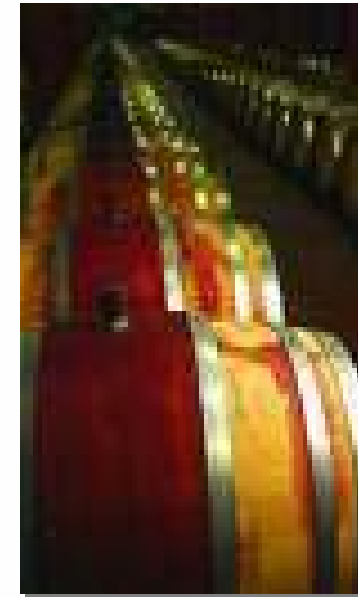
- National Drug Strategy Household Survey
- 2004 NDSHS is the most comprehensive survey of licit and illicit drug use ever undertaken in Australia
- Alcohol and Work: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare





# Alcohol use in Australia

- Three in five Australians drink at levels considered at low risk of harm in short and long term
- One in five Australians drink, once or more a month, at levels that put them at high risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term
- One in ten consumed alcohol in a way considered high risk to health in the long term





# Alcohol use in Australia

- 20-29 yr age group most likely to consume alcohol in long and short term risky manner
- Nearly two thirds of alcohol consumed is on days when safe limits are exceeded. For younger drinkers (14-24 yrs) this jumps to 80% of alcohol consumed







# Alcohol use in Australia

- 51% of assaults
- 40% of traffic accidents
- 33% of workplace accidents
- 25% of suicides
- 44% of fire injuries
- 34% of drownings





# Alcohol in Australian workplaces

- Over two-fifths (43.9%) of the workforce drinks at risky levels
- Generally, males are riskiest drinkers (except for women in management roles!)
- Workers' consumption shaped by prevailing workplace culture
- In 2001 2.7 million work days lost due to alcohol-related causes





# Illicit drug use in Australia

- Almost two in five have used an illicit drug in their lifetime
- About one in seven have used an illicit drug in past 12 months
- 20-29 year age group reports highest levels and frequency of use of illicit drugs
- Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug





# Illicit drug use in Australia

- Most commonly reported reason for using an illicit drug is curiosity about the effect
- Most commonly reported reason for not using an illicit drug is disinterest
- Alcohol is the drug most commonly used concurrently with every illicit drug
- Most common source of supply is a friend
- Most common place of use is at home







# Illicit drug use in Australian workplaces

- Around 17% of Australian workforce reports illicit drug use
- Workers in hospitality trades and construction occupations report highest levels of use
- Around 1 in 30 Australian males reports going to work under influence of illicit drugs
- Evidence of an association between use of drugs and compromised productivity/safety





# How are drugs used?

- Experimental – single or short term use
- Recreational/occasional use
- Circumstantial/situational use (specific purpose)
- Intensive use (major daily dose)
- Dependent (persistent, frequent high dose)

Only a minority of users become dependent. Most users use drugs recreationally or occasionally (this is the drug problem).





# Harm associated with drug use

Not just overdose or cirrhosis of the liver.

There is a wide variety of harm:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Social (including relationships)
- Financial
- Legal
- Occupational





# Treatment for drug use

- Relates to the type of use.
- Brief interventions.
- Rehabilitation and detoxification.
- Medical management (including pharmacotherapy).







# Take a break...

