

## Research Based Abstract Template

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## Policy and services responses to effects of climate change on the use of alcohol and other drugs: A scoping review

Sarah MacLean<sup>1</sup>, Julia de Nicola<sup>1</sup>, Kimberlea Cooper<sup>1</sup>, Heather Downey<sup>2</sup>, Jacqui Theobald<sup>2</sup>, Lisa de Kleyn<sup>3</sup>, Todd Denham<sup>3</sup>, Elle Perriman<sup>4</sup>, Eleanor Costello<sup>4</sup> & Lauren Rickards<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport, La Trobe University (LTU), Australia, <sup>2</sup> Rural Health School, LTU, Australia, <sup>3</sup> Climate Change Adaptation Lab, LTU, Australia,

<sup>4</sup> Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Melbourne, Australia

Presenter's email: [s.maclean@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:s.maclean@latrobe.edu.au)

**Introduction:** Current and emerging impacts of climate change for people who use alcohol and other drugs (AoD) include increased AoD use, unplanned withdrawal or changed substance availability, effects of displacement on drug access, reduced or disrupted service access and specific physiological vulnerabilities of some AoD users to events such as extreme heat.

**Method / Approach** We conducted a scoping review of peer reviewed literature identifying policy and service responses to mitigate the impacts of climate change for people who use AoD. English language peer reviewed literature published since 1998 that documents service responses was included. Events of interest included extreme heat, fires, storms, floods, droughts, displacement and longer-term environmental changes. 8204 studies were screened, with 12 included for data extraction by two authors.

**Key Findings** Included studies mostly pertain to mitigating effects of hurricanes (n=8) in the United States, with two addressing extreme heat and one each concerning floods and ongoing effects of climactic change. Documented service response included emergency plans, measures to ensure service user records would be available to other treating professionals, infrastructure at services such as backup generators and staff education.

**Discussions and Conclusions** Reports concerning climate-related needs of people who use AOD services suggest that a range of adaptation measures should be implemented in policy and service provision to reduce climate impacts on individuals and the worsening of social inequality. These adaptations include: developing contingency plans to help maintain service provision in the wake of repeated disasters; identifying safe places for people during extreme weather conditions, fire or flood; and supporting people to manage the mental health effects of changes in substance use caused by climate change-related factors. Beyond disaster response, adaptations include support to manage climate-anxiety or loss of employment/occupation due to altered environmental conditions, both of which appear associated with changed substance use.

**Implications for Practice or Policy** Where they exist, it is imperative to document and evaluate interventions and programs which seek to mitigate effects of climate change on people who use AoD. More systematic risk assessment and adaptation planning is needed.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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