

Alcohol and other drug policy and the role of research in driving reform

Chair: Melanie Walker

Chair's email: melanie.walker@aadc.org.au

Authors:

Melanie Walker¹, Amy Peacock², Rebecca Lang³, Robert Stirling⁴, Anke van der Sterren⁵, Rose Crossin⁶, Nadine Ezard⁷, James Dunne¹

¹ Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council, ² National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Australia, ³ Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies, ⁴ Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies, ⁵ Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT, ⁶ Department of Population Health, University of Otago, NZ, ⁷ National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs, UNSW Sydney, Australia

Aim: *Explore the way in which knowledge and evidence generated through research can be utilised to drive the types of policy reforms that lead to less harmful environments of AOD use.*

Panellist 1: Associate Professor Amy Peacock

Panellist 1 email: amy.peacock@unsw.edu.au

Panellist 2: Rebecca Lang

Panellist 2 email: Rebecca.lang@qnada.org.au

Panellist 3: Robert Stirling

Panellist 3 email: robert@nada.org.au

Panellist 4: Anke van der Sterren

Panellist 4 email: anke@atoda.org.au

Panellist 5: Dr Rose Crossin

Panellist 5 email: rose.crossin@otago.ac.nz

Panellist 6: Professor Nadine Ezard

Panellist 6 email: Nadine.Ezard@svha.org.au

Panellist 7: James Dunne

Panellist 7 email: james.dunne@aadc.org.au

Detailed description of topics to be discussed:

Research plays a key role in the production of new knowledge which shapes AOD practice and the way we improve outcomes for people at risk of, or experiencing, AOD harms. Yet reforms to the structural factors which shape the lives of people who use AOD are frequently difficult to enact and inconsistently applied. This is often despite strong evidence of the types of change that will lead to less harmful environments for AOD use.

This symposium centres discussion on systems and environments of AOD use and positions evidence not as a change agent by itself, but as an active, continuously evolving partner in policy reform. Drawing on experience from the field, this symposium brings together expert researchers and key advocates in the non-government AOD sector to explore what role evidence plays in change and how knowledge produced through research can be effectively used in our narratives and relationships with policy makers. It also considers what opportunities lie ahead and how the strengths of relations between the non-government AOD sector and researchers can be leveraged to drive policy change.

Discussion Section:

The symposium will provide opportunities for interaction between panel speakers and the audience through a question and answer session. This will follow after opening remarks from the symposium chair and panel speakers. The audience will be invited to consider the role which knowledge and evidence generated through research plays in their work, what they consider to be barriers or facilitators to change in the environment of AOD use, and what present or future role evidence and partnerships between the NGO AOD sector and researchers can play in driving policy reform.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

A.P. has received untied educational grants from Seqirus and Mundipharma for study of opioid medications. This organization had no role in study design, conduct or reporting, and funding ceased in 2020. AP is supported by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Investigator Fellowship.

R.C was named on an untied educational grant from Seqirus for study of opioid medications. This organization had no role in study design, conduct or reporting, and funding ceased in 2019.