

# Improving responses to trauma and alcohol and other drug-related problems: Results from a national stakeholder consultation

## Authors

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**Introduction:** Trauma-informed approaches to alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment are gaining traction internationally but what this entails is not well understood in relation to AOD treatment and service delivery. Research in this area is largely quantitative in approach and much remains unknown about consumer experiences.

**Methods:** This paper presents findings from a national consultation undertaken in 2023 to identify key issues for improving research, policy and practice on trauma and AOD-related problems in Australia. Our qualitative interviews with key stakeholders (n = 15) working in the fields of trauma-informed or AOD policy, research and treatment identified several gaps in knowledge about the relationships between trauma and AOD-related problems.

**Key findings:** Stakeholders expressed uncertainty about the role of trauma in AOD-related problems and the nature and extent of traumatic experiences among AOD consumers. There was a strong consensus among stakeholders that trauma-informed approaches to AOD treatment are inconsistently applied and unclear in their objectives. Some also expressed concerns about the compatibility of trauma-informed approaches with AOD treatment aims, including harm reduction, use reduction and/or abstinence. Stakeholders also questioned the potential of trauma-informed approaches to generate harms for AOD consumers by reducing the diversity of AOD experiences and responses that can be considered.

**Conclusions:** These findings suggest a need for more research in these key areas to inform the development of targeted and responsive policy and practice on trauma and AOD-related problems and novel research translation and dissemination strategies. Building on these findings, we introduce a new, qualitative interdisciplinary project that aims to address these issues.

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