# Evaluation of the Eva House (Mayumarri) Drug and Alcohol Program

## Researcher

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## Summary

Eva House is a healing centre for young women who are survivors of childhood trauma and abuse, aged 16-25 years. Eva House is based at Mayumarri in the Hunter Valley and is a three-week live-in rehabilitation program for up to eight participants.

The first week of the program focuses on developing a basic understanding of the Heal for Life Model as well as exploring participants’ issues and engaging them in workshops to develop an understanding of trauma and its effects, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, overcoming fear and anxiety, healthy relationships and boundaries. In the second week participants work through the trauma they have experienced. The last week aims to prepare participants for their return home.

This evaluation of the Eva House Drug and Alcohol Program was designed to assess how well the Program had met its goal to reduce the number of young women using alcohol and drugs to cope with the emotional pain caused by childhood trauma.

Over the 12-month-period of September 2010 and September 2011, 36 young women attended the three-week program. Of these, 27 first-time participants completed program. Twenty of these were able to be surveyed and interviewed before and six months after the program (response rate of 77%). Seventeen women also participated in a telephone survey as part of the follow up.

An anonymous survey was also completed by eight (89 per cent response rate) of the nine volunteer carers and one paid facilitator responsible for the program during the 12 month period.

## Outcomes

The evaluation showed that for all 20 women there was a significant reduction in:

* alcohol consumption, with seven reporting drinking less often, one woman becoming a non-drinker and four ceasing to binge drink.
* illicit drug use for 14 participants, and of these, eight stopped using illicit drugs.
* smoking, with three respondents quitting.

All 20 also reported at least one form of improvement in their general health, mental health or drug and alcohol related health six months after attending the program.

* Ten respondents reported an increase in their general health rating, and
* 17 respondents reduced their psychological distress score, with 10 of these moving into a safer psychological distress category.

All 17 respondents of the qualitative interviews felt that the program had a positive impact on their lives, stating:

*A life changing experience (Respondent A)*

*I'm doing really well. Have a job as an apprentice hairdresser and have a new boyfriend. Made good friends and off medication three months ago. Have not self-harmed once since Eva House. I cut myself six times in twelve months before that. No drugs since Eva House but still drinking a bit. (Respondent D)*

*A brilliant program. Am doing a lot better and working as a volunteer there now (Respondent E)*

All eight staff members were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall program, the program content, and their roles as carers or facilitator of the program.

*The empathy, acceptance, compassion, love and care the guests tell us they experience, and the tools they learn to overcome their trauma. The amazingly supportive and competent team I have the privilege of working with. Never before have I experienced such an unconditionally loving work environment, with such mutual respect, between carers, and carers and facilitator. Everyone feels equally valued, and I think this kind of role modelling is one of the things that helps allow the guests to feel safe enough to heal.*

## Recommendations

Based on the quantitative results and the comments made by staff and respondents, it is recommended that the program:

* includes a specific component in the program to teach the young women practical skills to avoid binge drinking and drug and alcohol related risky and abusive situations.
* includes a cognitive behavioural component in the program to help the young women deal with stressful situations when they go home.
* makes certain there is someone to take over the program should the facilitator become ill.

## Associated reports

[Eva House Drug and Alcohol Project: summary and report](https://fare.org.au/evaluation-of-the-eva-house-mayumarri-drug-and-alcohol-program/)

[view the report](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Eva-House-evaluation-final-report.pdf)