

More Australians are seeking treatment for alcohol

16 April 2024:

New data released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that the proportion of people seeking help for alcohol as their principal drug of concern is the highest in a decade.

Alcohol is the most common principal drug of concern people receive treatment for (42.5 per cent) compared to any other drug, followed by amphetamines (24 per cent), cannabis (17 per cent) and heroin (4.5 per cent).

Over the past 20 years the number of people who accessed treatment for alcohol as a common principal drug of concern has increased from 48,500 closed treatment episodes in 2003-04 to 92,417 closed treatment episodes in 2022-23.

Principal drugs of concern are defined by the AIHW as, ‘the main substance that the client stated led them to seek treatment from an alcohol and drug treatment agency.’

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Caterina Giorgi said the data released today in the AIHW’s report; *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: Early insights*, shows that more needs to be done to prevent alcohol harms and to support people who are doing it tough.

“Alcoholic products cause too much harm to far too many Australians. This research released today shows that more Australians are reaching out for treatment and support for alcohol each year. This is concerning given that we also know that for everyone who is seeking support, there are many more who are experiencing harm and not getting the help they need.

“Every phone is now a bottle shop and billboard making it almost impossible for people who are trying to cut back to avoid alcohol ads. Companies are also collecting more data on people than ever before, which means people who are struggling are increasingly targeted with alcohol marketing.

“We need to do more to prevent this harm. The review of the Privacy Act provides an opportunity for the Federal Government to ensure that people’s data isn’t collected and used to market harmful and addictive products to people who are doing it tough.

“State and territory governments can also play a role by reviewing and updating their legislation to ensure that the proper protections are in place for the delivery of alcohol, including having ID checks, not selling alcohol late at night into the homes, and introducing a two-hour safety pause between when an order is placed and when it is delivered.”

The data showing the rise in alcohol treatment episodes is contained in the *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: early insights, 2024* published by the AIHW today.

Caterina Giorgi, CEO Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education is available for interview.

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The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for an Australia free from alcohol harms – where communities are healthy and well and where laws, policies and programs are fair, equitable and just.

Working with local communities, people with lived experience of alcohol harm, values-aligned organisations, health professionals, researchers and governments across the nation, we are improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.

To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au