

Media Release

NEW OUTPATIENT DETOX PROGRAM TRIALLED IN ILLAWARRA

6 March 2014: Australia's first outpatient detox program for Aboriginal drinkers is being trialled in the Illawarra region.

Open for business and currently enrolling its first clients, the service aims to close the gap in the provision of alcohol withdrawal management services to Indigenous Australians

Developed by the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Services in collaboration with Drug Health Services at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the University of Sydney, the flagship program, is funded by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), and is one of ten 2013 Good Practice Grants awarded to community organisations throughout Australia to strengthen their capacity to respond to alcohol-related harms.

While outpatient detox services exist within mainstream services, Leanne Lawrence, coordinator of drug and alcohol services for Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Services says no formal service exists or has ever been evaluated for Aboriginal drinkers.

"We are developing a detox service at the [Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service](#) that is tailored to the needs of Aboriginal Australians, that overcomes many of the existing barriers such as the lack of services, cultural barriers, stigma, and more practical concerns such as childcare, transport and cost," Ms Lawrence said.

Ms Lawrence says clients and community members will be invited to take part in focus groups in order to better evaluate the program.

"Mainstream services are not always the most appropriate for Aboriginal Australians, so while it is important to close the gap in the provision of services such as the new Outpatient Detox service, it is just as important to evaluate the clinic to ensure it is actually serving the needs of the individuals and the community," Ms Lawrence said.

The 2013 Good Practice Grants aim to foster innovation and encourage community organisations to develop new products or systems that can be used by alcohol and other drug agencies throughout Australia to address the nation's rising alcohol harms.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the long term benefits of the newly announced projects are twofold, and extend beyond the significant positive impact on the local community.

"We know from our past efforts that these projects will not only make a significant contribution to minimising the impact of alcohol-related harms at the local level, but, going forward, will also provide organisations around the country with new ideas on how to address these issues", Mr Thorn said.

Michael Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) and Leanne Lawrence are available for interview.

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Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) FARE is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through its national grants program and commissioned research, FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. FARE works with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au