

Media statement

18 August 2015

Alcohol and tobacco excesses harming Queenslanders

Excessive alcohol and tobacco use is a bigger problem and doing more harm than Queenslanders realise.

Each year around 4,300 Queenslanders die and more than 65,000 are admitted to hospitals where alcohol, tobacco and other drug use is involved, according to a discussion paper for a new state-wide action plan.

The paper, released today by the Queensland Mental Health Commission, highlights the variety and extent of harm caused by alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

The State's Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said: "While harm from illegal drugs can be significant, tobacco and alcohol are the drugs most used in Queensland and responsible for the most harm."

"Fewer young people drink alcohol, however more Queenslanders are drinking alcohol at risky levels than the national average," Dr van Schoubroeck said.

"What the figures don't often show is the terrible harm that problematic alcohol and other drug use can cause to individuals, families and communities.

"Most people are aware that problematic alcohol and drug use can cause death, but less apparent is the impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing through illness, injury and social isolation.

"Stigma and discrimination can prevent people experiencing problems related to alcohol and drug use from seeking help and treatment.

"Families can be affected by family breakdown, domestic and family violence, child abuse and neglect, and housing issues. "

Smoking accounts for one in seven deaths in the State, with 3,700 Queenslanders dying each year from tobacco-related conditions.

In the three years to June 2013, Queensland Ambulance officers treated an increasing number of overdose cases, rising from 8,376 to 9,616. In just under half of these cases, alcohol was reported as being the primary drug of concern.

Dr van Schoubroeck said Queenslanders needed to take notice of the impact of alcohol and other drugs.

The discussion paper will inform consultations on the whole-of-government Alcohol and Other Drug Action Plan 2015–17 to prevent and reduce the adverse impact of drugs and alcohol on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

"The Action Plan will give us the blueprint for a broad systemic approach, with the flexibility to respond to emerging problems, such as the increasing use of the drug 'ice', alcohol-fuelled violence or other community concerns."



The Commission is partnering with government, non-government agencies, people who have experienced problems related to alcohol and drug use, their families and support people to develop the Action Plan, which is due for release later this year.

“There is a role for everyone to play to reduce the adverse impacts of alcohol and other drugs on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders,” Dr van Schoubroeck said.

Dr van Schoubroeck said the Commission was consulting on the discussion paper during August and September.

Consultation in regional Queensland will be jointly led by the Commission and the Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (QNADA) to seek the views of front line service providers, service users, their families and support persons.

The discussion paper is available at qmhc.qld.gov.au. Feedback is invited to aodactionplan@qmhc.qld.gov.au by 30 September 2015.

If you or someone you know is experiencing problems related to alcohol or drug use, contact the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 1800 177 833 for confidential counselling, advice and referral 24 hours, seven days a week.

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