

LAUNCH OF FIRST OF A KIND ONLINE CONTROL DRINKING PROGRAM

Recently Chief Executive Professor Steven Boyages officially launched 'Control Your Drinking' - an online web-based, self change program - at the Fleet Street Drug and Alcohol Service in North Parramatta.

Prof Boyages said, "This web-assisted interactive program is the first of its kind in Australia and is aimed at helping people to reduce excessive alcohol consumption and its associated problems within the community."

Mr Kevin Hedge, Area Network Director for Drug and Alcohol services said, "Alcohol misuse has a devastating effect on millions of lives every year."

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug in Australia with economic costs of approximately \$7.6 billion per year. In NSW alone, alcohol abuse costs \$7 million dollars each day in terms of health care, loss of productivity, crime and road accidents.

This cost effective convenient online program offers assistance to people with drinking problems to be treated in the comfort and privacy of their home. Clients are not required to attend a clinic, as treatment information is available via the internet free of charge.

"The client completes a 15 minute clinical questionnaire and immediately receives personalised feedback and an introduction to four modules of proven clinical information," said Associate Professor Sitharthan Thiagarajan, Director Australian Centre for Addiction Research.

"The stigma which can be associated with alcohol use can deter people from seeking help. The beauty of this program is that people can remain anonymous during their involvement in the treatment program", he said.



Steven Boyages, Sitharthan Thiagarajan, Dominic Dawson, Director Clinical Operations Integrated Health, David McGrath, Director NSW Centre for Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol and Kevin Hedge.

In 2004, NSW Health funded the Australian Centre for Addiction Research to implement a novel program via mail.

"The 'Controlled Drinking by Mail' program was a world first, enrolling 2,500 people - of which 60% were female. The program is backed by several clinical trials and favourably endorsed by clients.

"As a result, the web-assisted program Control Your Drinking was devised to reach the wider community and is aimed to further promote the uptake of information and engagement in treatment to reduce excessive alcohol consumption," said Prof Boyages.

The 'Control Your Drinking' website address is www.acar.net.au or for enquiries telephone 1800 006 577.