



Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

Substance misuse is a major cause of preventable illness and social problems across Australia. Alcohol and drug misuse are associated with debilitating physical and mental health conditions, antisocial behaviour, homelessness and crime. Consequently, addressing the harms of substance misuse remains a priority concern for Port Phillip.

What is substance misuse?

Alcohol misuse is a pattern of drinking that results in harm to one's health, interpersonal relationships or ability to work (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Drug misuse is defined as the use of a substance for a purpose not consistent with legal or medical guidelines (World Health Organization, 2006).

Tobacco use is one of the leading causes of preventable illness world-wide. Unlike the use of alcohol or other drugs, there is no safe level of tobacco consumption. "Every cigarette is causing you damage" (Cancer Council Victoria, 2019).

How does substance misuse affect the Port Phillip community?

According to population level surveys recently conducted by VicHealth and the Victorian Department of Health, Port Phillip has:

- The third highest illicit drug-related ambulance attendances and the highest rate of illicit drug-related hospital admissions among local government areas in Victoria.
- 803 liquor licences in operation, the third highest number of liquor outlets in the state.
- A much higher alcohol-related ambulance attendance and hospital admissions than the Victorian average.
- A higher lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm than the Victorian average.
- A much higher than average number of residents who believe that "getting drunk every now and then is okay".
- A significantly lower number of residents who smoke than the Victorian average (VicHealth 2015: DHHS 2018).



In addition to health impacts, there is a clear correlation between alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour, and crime. In 2016, 19 per cent of Australians adults had been verbally abused, 11 per cent had been put in fear, and 7 per cent had been physically abused by someone under the influence of alcohol in the past 12 months (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017).

Within Port Phillip, there has been an increase in criminal incidents occurring on streets, lanes and footpaths and car parks, with one third of the total criminal incidents occurring in St Kilda (Crime Statistics Agency, 2020). As a municipality which hosts a number of events and is a location often frequented by visitors and tourists, alcohol and drug related antisocial behaviour is present.

How does substance misuse affect some groups in our community?

- Use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs are key risk factors contributing to inequalities between **Aboriginal** and non-Aboriginal Australians.
- There is a strong correlation between problematic alcohol or other drug use and experiences of **homelessness**.
- National data indicates that alcohol consumption at high levels was more common among **younger people** than the general population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020).
- National data indicates that, while in the past, smokers tended to be young adults, they now tend to be **middle aged**.

How has COVID-19 affected substance misuse?

- Victorians in coronavirus lockdowns during 2020 indicated that anxiety and stress had led to increased alcohol intake (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2020).
- The risk of short-term harm from alcohol consumption across the state remains unchanged since 2017 at 11 per cent, however the rate of short-term harm from alcohol consumption is higher in some groups including people whose employment has been affected by COVID-19, young people and people from bushfire affected communities (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2020).
- The risk of long-term harm from alcohol consumption is more likely for people from bushfire affected areas and those facing loss of income or employment (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2020).

Why is managing substance misuse important for our community?

- The harms associated with alcohol misuse can have devastating impacts on individuals and their families and can seriously affect relationships, work and family life.
- Tobacco continues to cause more ill health and premature death than any other drug.
- Illicit drug use is a major risk factor for ill health and death, being linked with HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, low birth weight, malnutrition, poisoning, mental illness, suicide, self-inflicted injury and overdose.



- As there is a clear correlation between alcohol misuse, mental health problems, antisocial behaviour and crime, action that Council takes to reduce alcohol consumption will positively impact on other health and social outcomes across the municipality.

How are the Federal and State Governments managing substance misuse?

The Federal and State Governments establish policy relevant to substance misuse, develop rolling action plans and provide funding to peak community-based agencies that work to minimise the harm arising from substance misuse rather than a prohibition, zero tolerance approach to substance use.

Organisations in receipt of government funding include the Heart Foundation and affiliate state foundations, Cancer Council Australia and affiliated state councils, drug and alcohol foundations and peak organisations delivering drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. Together, with revenue raised via donations and campaigns, these peak organisations work to address issues at a local and national level.

What is the role of the Port Phillip City Council in responding to and preventing harms associated with substance misuse?

The role of the Council is to:

- Ensure that Council services and facilities have implemented operational policies and procedures that will minimise harms from substance use.
- Partner with police, licenced venues and local agencies to balance the contribution that licensed premises make to the vitality of our local areas, with the management of social, economic and health impacts of substance misuse.
- Provide safe disposal of drug litter and drug paraphernalia through daily cleaning programs and a syringe disposal collection contract.
- Develop partnerships with government and non-government peak agencies to implement harm minimisation approaches to substance misuse, through mechanisms such as awareness raising campaigns and local level research, monitoring and reporting.

By working to address the drivers of mental ill health, which are linked to substance misuse, including homelessness, discrimination, economic disadvantage, and social isolation, Council can improve outcomes in this area.

Who are our partners?

Addressing substance misuse involves a cross sector approach, which includes partnership development with the government, business and community sectors. Some of our key partners include:

- Victoria Police
- Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation



Healthy Eating - City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

- Liquor outlets and venues
- The Department of Health and Human Services
- STAR Health
- Access Health
- Windana
- First Step
- VicHealth
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Australian Drug and Alcohol Foundation
- QUIT Victoria
- Community based sport and recreation organisations and facilities
- Venue operators and events managers.

What may change over the next five years?

- Alcohol and other drug use may increase as people respond to the stress and anxiety that arises from the COVID-19 pandemic by turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol and other substance misuse.

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017. *National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) 2016: key findings*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illegal-use-of-drugs/ndshs-2016-key-findings/data>
[Accessed 29 12 2020].

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020. *Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/priority-populations/young-people>
[Accessed 29 12 2020].

Cancer Council Victoria, 2019. *Leading the world in tobacco control*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cancervic.org.au/about/stories/leading-the-world-in-tobacco-control.html>
[Accessed 12 29 2020].

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018. *Workplace Health Promotion: Alcohol & Substance Misuse*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/health-strategies/substance->



Healthy Eating - City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

[misuse/index.html](#)

[Accessed 29 12 2020].

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2020. *VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study*. [Online]

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.PO909>

[Accessed 29 12 2020].

World Health Organization, 2006. *Management of substance abuse: Lexicon of alcohol and drug terms published by the World Health Organization*. [Online]

Available at: https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/terminology/who_lexicon/en/

[Accessed 29 12 2020].