

Please cascade to all media staff

***Mindframe* advice for the safe reporting of suspected accidental drug overdoses in NSW, Central Coast**

Australian media are reminded to report sensitively on the recent suspected accidental drug overdoses in Budgewoi (NSW, Central Coast). Evidence suggests that the way in which a person who uses alcohol and other drugs is described, can impact an individual's self-esteem, shape community perceptions, increase stigma and decrease help-seeking behaviour.

The *Mindframe* for Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) team encourages media to consult the [Mindframe AOD guidelines](#) and to remain responsible in its coverage of this incident by:

- Promoting and encouraging help-seeking regarding AOD use
- Using appropriate and factual language that is non-stigmatising
- Framing this incident as a public health concern, not as criminal activity.

Help-seeking

Media are reminded to include AOD-related help-seeking information to ensure community members have information available should they need to access support. Help-seeking information is outlined below.

Alcohol and Other Drugs Support

National Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline: 1800 250 015

Other 24/7 support services

Counselling Online: counsellingonline.org.au
Family Drug Support: 1300 368 186
Lifeline: 13 11 14
Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
MensLine: 1300 789 978

Other resources

Turning Point: turningpoint.org.au
Alcohol and Drug Foundation: adf.org.au
Positive Choices: positivechoices.org.au
Head to Health: headtohealth.gov.au
headspace: headspace.org.au
ReachOut: reachout.com



Language

Stigmatising language can have an impact on the community and marginalise people who use AOD. The *Mindframe* AOD guidelines recommend using language that does not exaggerate, is not alarmist or sensationalistic. Please see below for preferred language.

Issue	Preferred	Problematic
Labelling a person by their AOD use can be stigmatising and demoralising.	Person who uses drugs; person who actively uses drugs; person who has a dependence on; person with non-problematic drug use.	Drug user; junkie; crackhead; smackhead; pothead; drug abuser; alcoholic; addict; hopeless drug user
	Person in recovery; person who has stopped using drugs	Former or ex-addict; reformed addict
Language that is particularly negative in tone.	Instead use language that is neutral, or hopeful and not stigmatising e.g. Currently using drugs	Setback, fallen off the wagon.
Assuming someone has a diminished quality of life due to their AOD use.	Instead use a factual descriptor e.g. has a dependence or a descriptor chosen by the person the story is about.	Suffering from addiction/drug abuse/ etc.
The use of combatant language can be discriminatory.	Respond, program, address, manage; Safe consumption facility; negative/positive for substance use	Fight, counter, combat, drugs; Fix rooms; Dirty screen, Clean
Avoid language that is alarmist or sensational in nature.	Describe rates in terms of increasing or decreasing, provide context and specific information e.g. the rate of crystal methamphetamine use and increased in Sydney from 2014 according to this particular credible source.	Avoid using the word epidemic to describe an increase in prevalence or rates.

Framing

Harmful AOD use is a public health issue, not a moral failing, and media portrayals should reflect this. Australian media are encouraged to seek expert opinion regarding a wider perspective of the issues surrounding this incident. Below is a quote from a lived experience representative, who can be contacted for further comment.

“In my experience, the best way to prevent future overdose and engage users is through a health approach rather than law enforcement.” Jack Nagle (founder, [Connection Based Living](#))

If you would like more information or support on contacting experts in this sector for comment, please contact the [Mindframe team](#).

More information on reporting guidelines can be found on the [Mindframe](#) website.

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