

## Alcohol and other drugs

*“Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) are closely tied to mental health; when people have AOD issues, generally there are underlying mental health issues.” [Workshop participant, 2021]*

The National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 outlines a national commitment to harm minimisation through balanced adoption of effective demand, supply and harm reduction strategies.

Health, social and economic harms affect every Australian directly or indirectly.

“My young person isn’t keen to engage and when he does try, the person he has spoken to doesn’t seem to get it and he gives up without getting much further than assessment.”

“The services are good, but there’s just not enough of them out there.”

### Alcohol

**4.5%** of the total disease burden in Australia was due to alcohol use, making it the fifth leading risk factor contributing to disease burden.

**The top 5 diseases linked to alcohol use where lives were lost:**



Suicide and self-inflicted injuries



Liver cancer



Road traffic injuries  
(motor vehicle occupants)



Poisoning



Chronic liver disease



Males experienced greater burden due to alcohol use than females

1.9 times greater total disease burden among people who experience the most disadvantage (compared with the least disadvantage)

**Groups of people who are more likely to have problematic alcohol or other drug use:**



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



People with mental health issues



Young people



People experiencing homelessness



LGBTIQ+ people



People who are socially isolated



People impacted by family violence

*People who inject drugs experience considerably poorer health outcomes than other drug users.*

### Illicit drugs

**3%** of the total disease burden in Australia was due to illicit drug use:

Amphetamines

**0.7%**

Cannabis

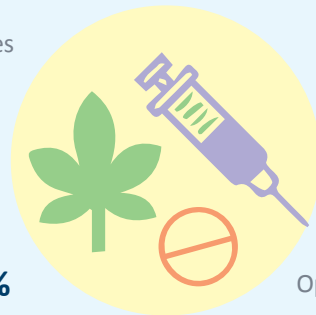
**0.2%**

Cocaine **0.3%**

Unsafe injecting practices

**0.5%**

Opioids **0.9%**



**The top 5 diseases linked to illicit drug use where lives were lost:**



Poisoning



Suicide and self-inflicted injuries



Chronic liver disease



Liver cancer



Road traffic injuries (motor vehicle occupants)

Males experienced more than twice the burden from illicit drug use

People who experience most disadvantage have a disease burden 2.1 times higher than people with the least disadvantage

“There are so many different services, but I don’t know which one is the right one.”

# Alcohol and other drugs

## Gippsland data

A high proportion of people in Gippsland consume alcohol at risky levels compared to Victoria (2017)

Indicator	Bass Coast	South Gippsland	Baw Baw	Latrobe	East Gippsland	Wellington	Victoria
Likely to increase lifetime risk of harm (> 2 standard drinks per day)	73.4%*	66.6%	59.2%	63.5%	67.3%	64.8%	59.5%
Likely to increase risk of injury on a single occasion (>4 standard drinks on a single occasion)	54.5%*	46.8%	45.1%	47.8%	55.7%*	53.4%*	43.0%

\* Significantly higher than Victoria.

A high rate of ambulance attendances in Gippsland are related to alcohol and drugs. The highest call outs for alcohol intoxication and illicit and pharmaceutical drug use is in Latrobe with 674, 465 and 367 attendances respectively (2019-20 rates per 100,000 population).

## Services and use

### Main needs identified by people with lived experience:

Improved availability of services – both acute care and follow up support

Help to find and navigate the appropriate services and health professionals to meet their needs

Improved quality of care offered by health professionals who are sufficiently trained, including in complexities faced by people with a dual diagnosis

Barriers to access are more significant for Indigenous people, aged people and geographically or socially isolated people

### Services available in Gippsland include:

[Gippsland HealthPathways](#) includes a suite of clinical pathways and supportive local public and private referral options to Alcohol and Other Drug treatment services

Intake and assessment – call Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) intake **1300 022 760** weekdays 9am to 5pm. For both AOD and mental health – community support, counselling, short term intervention

Indigenous services offered by Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative (GEGAC)

Youth services offered by Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS), Bass Coast Health (BCH), Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS) and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health (GLCH)

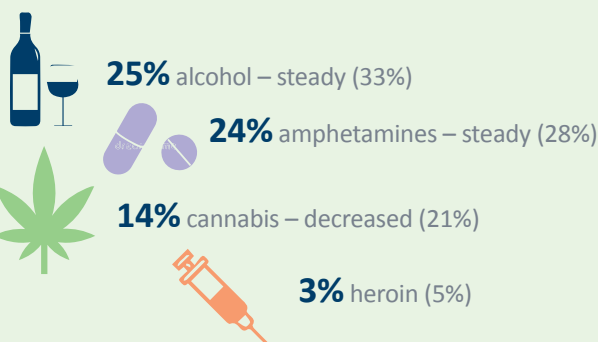
Pharmacotherapy service (LCHS, GLCH, BCH)

Residential rehabilitation service in Bairnsdale – operated by Odyssey House

Day rehabilitation service operated by Latrobe Community Health Service

Withdrawal beds are available at hospitals in Bairnsdale, Sale and Leongatha

The most common drugs of concern among Gippsland residents accessing alcohol and other drug services (compared to national averages):



### The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact:

Mixed findings about the consumption of AOD; with some people reporting an increase in use while others reporting a decrease

Access to treatment has been affected and data suggests a significant unmet need for drug and alcohol counselling

Existing drug users reported increased use of cannabis and e-cigarettes, while use of MDMA and methamphetamines decreased

Impacted prescribers and people accessing opioid pharmacotherapy treatment

Increased use of online support

No respite or opportunity to leave the home for those with problematic alcohol or drug use and their family

The [DirectLine](#) telephone service for alcohol and other drug support and referrals **1800 888 236**