

**Submission  
No 18**

## **INQUIRY INTO DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT**

**Organisation:** Manly Drug Education and Counselling Centre

**Date received:** 28/02/2013

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## **Submission**

**From:** Manly Drug Education and Counselling Centre

**To:** The inquiry into Drug and Alcohol treatment

**Related to the Terms of Reference Item 1, 4 and 5:**

### **Background**

MDECC is an innovative non government drug and alcohol organisation based on the northern beaches in Sydney.

Our highly qualified clinical team works with young people (aged 12 – 28) with alcohol and other drug issues and their families.

MDECC's philosophy is one of harm minimisation, in line with the National policy.

Our Counsellors provide a client focussed approach for the individual and their family. We also provide treatment to clients with coexisting mental health issues.

MDECC's Targeted Intervention Program aims to reduce the risk of harm through a combination of educational and therapeutic programs. These programs provide a collaborative conversation about alcohol and other drugs, and where possible strengthen a young person's motivation and commitment to change.

The Health Promotion Program builds effective working relationships within the local community and broader health sector, using evidence based education and prevention measures to encourage young people not to use, to delay use or to use less alcohol or other drugs.

### **Rationale**

Traditionally in the AOD sector drug treatment services generally have minimal involvement from families and carers. The focus of treatment is on the person with the "drug use issue" and whilst the family may be offered some psycho/social education, therapeutic support is minimal.

For many years now MDECC has prioritised young people and their families as the main target population. Unlike traditional family systems work, clients of the service have their own individual counsellor i.e. the young person and the parent each has their own counsellor however, parents who present jointly are seen together.

Families often present to MDECC in crisis with diminished quality of life compounded with shattered hopes and dreams for their young person. We see symptoms of depression, anxiety and in some cases acute stress disorder.

A specialised family program has been conducted within the agency for many years and has evaluated well. The program focuses on providing a safe place for families to learn how to respond to their loved ones drug and/or alcohol use.

MDECC has found that when working with the family of a young problematic substance abuser that the chances of the young person making changes is enhanced.

Even if the parents contact the service when their young person is refusing to engage, MDECC will then work with the family and in many cases has seen the young person then present to either MDECC or another service. Clients report that the shift in family dynamics and their young person no longer being enabled creates a catalyst for the young person to access treatment.

MDECC is currently conducting research and would be happy to share results. The research aims to validate MDECC's anecdotal evidence that working with the family of a young problematic substance abuser creates the opportunity for the individual to shift towards a readiness for change.

This project is in line with National and State priorities, recognising the importance of working with families.

## **Conclusion**

MDECC has found that family culture is pertinent to the recovery of the individual and parents/family are crucial to the long term abstinence/reduction in drug and alcohol use.

## **Recommendation:**

That there is increased access for families to receive the therapeutic support required to facilitate a positive shift in family culture and an increased opportunity for long term changes for their young person.