



MEDIA RELEASE

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Are we doing enough for young people with drug and alcohol addiction? New report reveals widespread unmet need

A new report released today reveals there is high demand and widespread unmet need for treatment services and support for young Australians with drug and alcohol addiction.

[‘Evolve 2020: Are we doing enough for young people with drug and alcohol addiction?’](#) was commissioned by Sir David Martin Foundation and makes seven key recommendations calling for a nationwide expansion of youth-specific services to prevent vulnerable young people being caught in a debilitating and lifelong cycle of addiction.

The report shows that almost 40% (76,000) of all those requesting help for drug and alcohol addiction in Australia each year are under the age of 30. However, a lack of youth specific treatment options leaves many of these young people in adult programs not tailored to their needs.

“Young people have the strongest recovery rate of any age group if given the opportunity,” explained Helen Connealy, General Manager of Sir David Martin Foundation.

“But their needs are different and varied than other stages of life. Many have suffered trauma, mental illness or suffered domestic violence. Family are so important in their recovery but not always available. Often these young people haven’t had the space to grow up and mature in the traditional sense.”

[Sir David Martin Foundation](#) has been helping young people in crisis for 30 years, and is the primary funder of Mission Australia’s [Triple Care Farm](#) in the NSW Southern Highlands, a best practice, holistic treatment centre for young people affected by drug and alcohol issues. In that time, over 3,000 young people’s lives have been saved, with 200 students each year now supported through the program’s Rehabilitation, Withdrawal and Aftercare components.

“We’ve been funding a best practice model of treatment for young people for decades and we know our programs work. But we wanted to gain evidence of the scale of the problem across the country,” Ms Connealy said.

“This report (which is the first of its kind in Australia) shows that although there is good work happening, collaboratively the sector needs to do more if we are to reach more young people.”

A lack of adequate rural and regional treatment options was a key finding of the research.

“The report found that young people living in rural and regional areas in all Australian states and territories are more likely to experience disadvantage, engage in harmful substance use and have poorer access to essential programs. Yet almost 60% of treatment agencies are located in major cities and only 6% in remote or very remote areas.”

In response to the report's recommendations, Ms Connealy said Sir David Martin Foundation will launch a new campaign - Youth Network 2025 - to expand Aftercare services across the nation to reach those in need.

"By 2025 we aim to have Youth Workers across the nation expanding our Aftercare program to help thousands of young people connect with safe housing options, education, employment and the community.

"The Aftercare program runs for six months after withdrawal and offers each young person access to a qualified youth worker to support their transition back into the community. Aftercare is shown to be fundamental to a young person's ongoing health and wellness and helps set them up for a brighter future.

"It's our hope that we can use the learnings from this report to work collaboratively with the sector and expand our reach to offer vital Aftercare support to young people who need across the nation."

Significantly, the report was commissioned pre-COVID-19, which has intensified the need for swift and immediate action.

"*Evolve 2020* tells us there is already a critical unmet need and a shortage of appropriate services nationwide for those needing help to recover from drug and alcohol addiction. With increased youth unemployment rates and the unprecedented financial, emotional and health challenges brought on by the pandemic, we anticipate that the need will intensify rapidly," said Ms Connealy.

"The new normal will be harder for all young Australians but there is no time to wait for the vulnerable youth who need and are seeking help now. We are highly experienced in helping young people *get well* and now we want to focus on also *keeping them well* long term."

Download a copy of the full report [here](#)

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