



Substance
Misuse
Limestone
Coast

Global Problems, Local Solutions

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PANDEMIC IMPACT UPON AOD SECTOR EXPLORED THROUGH STUDY

A study to determine the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic upon Limestone Coast’s drug and alcohol services sector is expected to provide key insights into planning where resources will be required in future.

The region’s leading AOD advocacy service, Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) is coordinating the online survey, in conjunction with the local Drug Action Team.

The survey will be targeted towards government and non-government agencies across the region, including mental health counsellors, GPs, hospital emergency departments and homelessness services.

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said the questions aimed to canvas a wide range of topics, from demand for online services to the availability of drugs and alcohol during lockdown.

“We are exploring the short and long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on Limestone Coast agencies, their current and future resources, their client base and the wider community,” she said.

“We want to know who is seeing increased uptake of alcohol or drug use and understand how this, plus the extenuating pandemic circumstances, may have impacted how they deliver their services.

“By surveying a wide range of agencies and services, SMLC can begin to get a clearer picture of our region’s needs.”

Ms Bouchier said the pandemic had brought to light some disturbing statistics around increased alcohol and drug use.

“With people forced to stay at home and major changes in work, family and leisure time, there has been increased alcohol use reported on a national level,” she said.

“In April, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) found 1-in-5 Australians had purchased more alcohol than usual and 70 per cent were drinking more alcohol than normal with one third now drinking on a daily basis.

“It’s important to see whether these issues are replicated or entirely different on a local and regional level, to better inform our planning.”

Last month, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) launched a new parental education campaign – *You haven’t been drinking alone*, in response to changing alcohol consumption patterns during the pandemic.

“The campaign focuses on parents and being a good role model to their children when it comes to alcohol consumption,” Ms Bouchier said.

“The ADF surveyed 1,000 Australian parents and found 29 per cent of parents of school-aged children have increased their alcohol intake during the Covid-19 lockdown.”

The results of the Limestone Coast survey will be made public and available for participating agencies and services later this year, Ms Bouchier said.

“This valuable input, knowledge and opinions from our local experts will form a better understanding of the current issues, where the gaps are and what the future needs may be for our community and region.”

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