



national drug research institute



IMPACT  
SNAPSHOT

2024-25

Preventing harmful drug use in Australia

## NDRI - By the Numbers

**154**

PUBLICATIONS

**93**

PRESENTATIONS

**51**

PROJECTS

**\$3.2 MILLION**

RESEARCH INCOME

**55**

PEOPLE

**15**

PhD/HONOURS STUDENTS

**144**

JOURNAL ARTICLES

**1,000**

WEBINAR REGISTRANTS

**1,000**

MEDIA MENTIONS

**23 MILLION**

MEDIA AUDIENCE



# Highlights and Achievements

- Professor Paul Griffiths took up the role of NDRI Director in February 2025. Scientific Director at the European Union Drug Agency since 2010, Paul brings three decades of international experience in the alcohol and other drug (AOD) field.
- More than 100 people gathered in Fremantle/Walyalup for the 2025 NDRI research symposium, Challenges and Opportunities – Reducing AOD-related Harm in 2025 and Beyond. Attracting in-person delegates from across the sector, from health practitioners and police to treatment providers and policy makers, the symposium featured keynotes from global experts, an interactive panel on sector challenges and opportunities, and research presentations from NDRI academics with a strong focus on early career researchers.



- NDRI alcohol researcher William Gilmore won a highly competitive Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) for the Addressing Alcohol Use and Injury in Australia's ageing population research project, which will focus on the growing public health challenge of alcohol use in Australia's rapidly ageing population.
- Professor Steve Allsop was part of the Australian delegation attending the 68th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna as the technical advisor to the Australian Government.

- Professor Simon Lenton was invited to give evidence to the Australian Parliamentary Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023, highlighting the proposed Bill was consistent with the developing research evidence on the impact of cannabis legalisation schemes.

- Only the third Australian-based researcher to be elected to the role, internationally-respected NDRI researcher Michael Livingston was elected the next president of the international Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol.



- Six successful webinars were held as part of the revamped NDRI webinar series, attracting more than 1,000 registrations from across Australia.
- NDRI researcher Shelley Walker's research was recognised with a university-wide award for research excellence, receiving the Award for Research Excellence – People (early career researcher) in the Curtin University 2024 Research and Engagement Awards, the second consecutive year an NDRI researcher won the award.
- NDRI Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Health Program Leader Jocelyn Jones gave expert evidence at the Coronial inquest into the death of Heather Calgaret, who died in custody in Victoria; the inquest examined Victoria's parole system and availability of mental health and other support for ATSI people.

## IMPACT STUDY: Research helps prompt new nitrous oxide regulations to curb harm

**NDRI's research identified emerging trends in nitrous oxide use and helped drive a major public health response, including education and new WA regulations aimed at reducing harm and the burden on the WA healthcare system.**

There was a strong upward trend in nitrous oxide use in Australia in the 2010s. Despite its harmless reputation, there were also increasing reports of severe and potentially irreversible neurological harm associated with heavy use, particularly among young people, which also significantly burdens the healthcare system.

In 2020, NDRI researcher Jodie Grigg published a Drug Trends Bulletin as part of the national EDRS project highlighting a concerning rise in nitrous use and harms and recommending a public health response, including a review of regulations and new harm reduction initiatives.

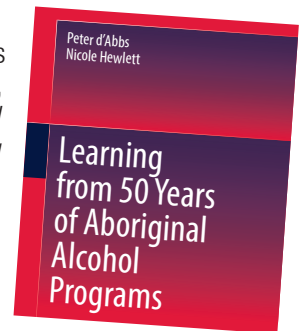
Corroborated by Clinical Toxicologist at Royal Perth Hospital Jessamine Soderstrom, her findings led to the formation of an interagency government expert working group in late 2020 at the WA Mental Health Commission, including NDRI's Dr Grigg and Professor Simon Lenton. In partnership, they made submissions to the Therapeutic Goods Administration triangulating data on use and harms and planned a state health response, including education, clinician upskilling and new regulations.

Informed by the submissions, the TGA reclassified nitrous oxide from Schedule 4 to 6 mandating warning labels and age restrictions on sales and, informed by the expert group and NDRI's seminal work, new WA regulations restricted sales from October 2024 to registered food and beverage businesses and prohibited larger canisters, which had been linked with harm. New educational resources for clinicians, industry, and consumers were also developed.

# Highlights and Achievements



- NDRI and the Mental Health Commission co-hosted the International Alcohol Policy Forum: Global Perspectives on Reducing Harm public forum in Perth, which attracted almost 100 attendees from government, non-government and community sectors and featured presentations by leading alcohol researchers from around the world (pictured above).
- The Mental Health Commission of WA invited NDRI researcher Jodie Grigg as a subject matter expert to contribute to developing an ecstasy/MDMA harm reduction eLearning resource for AOD and mental health workers and other human service providers.
- NDRI hosted the international Kettil Bruun Society Symposium, attracting delegates and alcohol policy research experts from across the globe. The first time in more than a decade the annual 5-day symposium had been hosted in Australia, highlights included 170 delegates from five continents and 23 countries, delivery of 112 papers, and a focus on building capacity with 44 students and delegates from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- NDRI researchers in Perth and Melbourne supervised 15 PhD scholars and Honours students.
- NDRI Harm Reduction team researchers Jodie Grigg and Sophie Haywood presented key findings from the WA Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) at the WA Drug Trends Seminar held at the State Library, followed by a panel discussion featuring community experts Paul Dessauer (PBHRWA) and Matt Ryan (WANADA) as well as NDRI Director Paul Griffiths.
- NDRI Associate Professor Michael Livingston was awarded Healthway funding for the Measuring Alcohol Risk, Information Needs and Pathways Using an AI Chatbot project exploring the potential of an AI chatbot to collect alcohol consumption data and provide information to people seeking help.
- NDRI Early Career Researcher Emma Vieira was awarded the Ole Jørgen Skog Early Career Researcher Award at the 2025 Kettil Bruun Society conference in Glasgow, a prize awarded each year for the best paper by an early career researcher. It is only the third time the award has been won by an Australian researcher in its 20-year history.
- NDRI is a designated World Health Organization (WHO) Research Collaborating Centre for the Prevention of Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders. During the reporting period, NDRI progressed two projects with the WHO, focused on preventing opioid overdose and minimising alcohol harms among adolescents, with findings from both projects presented at the 5th WHO forum on Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviours in Geneva.
- The [www.alcoholharmtool.info](http://www.alcoholharmtool.info) online alcohol harm visualisation tool developed by NDRI researchers was updated to include the latest available data on alcohol harm trends in Australia.
- NDRI research and expertise was shared with the community via 1,000 media mentions, reaching an audience reach of 23 million and recording an ASR (the equivalent of media coverage in advertising value) of \$44 million. Traditional media was supported via NDRI's social media channels, with 3,300 followers and subscribers across multiple platforms.
- NDRI researchers Emma Vieira and Nic Taylor authored pieces for the Institute of Alcohol Studies blog answering questions around whether teenage alcohol-related harms are matching declines in consumption and why the minimum unit price was removed in the Northern Territory.
- NDRI research and researchers were widely referenced in the book, *Learning From 50 years of Aboriginal Alcohol Programs: Beating the Grog in Australia*, a comprehensive overview of many actions taken over the past 50 years to prevent and reduce alcohol harms among Aboriginal people.
- NDRI Senior Research Fellow William Gilmore received two early career researcher awards in two days, being named the Curtin University Faculty of Health Sciences Early Career Researcher of the Year 2024 and the enAble Institute 2024 Early Career Researcher on consecutive days.
- Associate Professor Michael Livingston provided evidence to support the Victorian Liquor Commission's successful objection to an alcohol retailer being established in the regional town of Daylesford.
- Professor Tanya Chikritzhs' interview with online science news outlet Howtown, explaining issues around apparent protective effects of moderate alcohol use on health for an episode entitled How Dangerous Could One Beer Be?, has been viewed 1.3 million times.
- Dr William Gilmore was recognised with a Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Emerging Leaders Award, a program designed to support early and mid-career researchers who narrowly missed out on highly-competitive NHMRC Investigator grants.



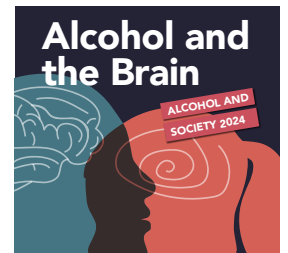
# Highlights and Achievements



*“The research and evaluation undertaken by NDRI has translated into practical outcomes, not only for the WA Police Force but for other Australian law enforcement agencies.”*

(see ‘Impact Study’ below)

- NDRI hosted a delegation from Universiti Putra Malaysia, sharing AOD research and expertise across policy areas ranging from vaping, alcohol and minimum unit pricing, and hospitalisations among people who inject drugs to the impact of amphetamine type stimulants on mental health.
- NDRI made a substantial invited submission to the Australian Parliament’s House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia, resulting in the Institute and its research being cited eight times in the Committee’s Interim report. The wide-ranging submission addressed several topics based on NDRI research outputs including the costs of alcohol and other drug use to the Australian community; responding to alcohol-related harm; harm reduction, drug overdose and toxicity; prisons and people who inject drugs; legal options for ‘recreational’ or ‘non-medical’ cannabis; and, school alcohol and drug education programs.
- NDRI research was disseminated via 250 publications and presentations, supported by researchers sharing findings and expertise in The Conversation, which reached 620,000 readers via 14 articles, and the NDRI website, which had 2 million page views.
- Alcohol Policy Research Program Leader Professor Tanya Chikritzhs co-authored the international Alcohol and the Brain report, launched in the European Parliament, with medical and public health researchers from Canada, Sweden and the United States.
- NDRI expanded research and other collaborations during the reporting period, with the Institute now collaborating with 134 entities, including government, international and Aboriginal organisations as well as other research centres.



## IMPACT STUDY: Evaluation of WA Police using naloxone to save lives leads nation

**NDRI’s evaluation of the WA Police Naloxone Pilot showed police ability to recognise and respond to an opioid overdose was improved and their willingness to administer naloxone to save a life was also increased. This is good news for overdose victims but also for police who have to deal with this often-traumatic situation. It has been a game changer and resulted in police in other jurisdictions rolling out similar life-saving programs.**

Over the past decade, both in Australia and internationally, deaths from heroin and other opioid overdoses have been increasing. Naloxone is a medicine that comes in a nasal spray and is highly effective in reversing an opioid overdose with no adverse effects. Police officers are often the first, and sometimes the only, emergency responders on the scene of an opioid overdose but have limited capacity to intervene.

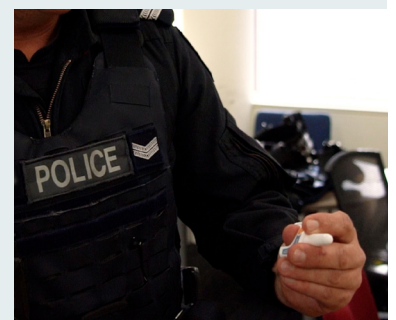
In 2021-22, the WA Police Force ran the first naloxone pilot in the Southern Hemisphere, where 447 police officers were trained in overdose management and naloxone administration.

NDRI researchers Seraina Agramunt and Simon Lenton worked with WA Police and the WA Mental Health Commission to evaluate that pilot.

This showed that the program was well received, improved management of

overdose, and saved lives. Police willingness to administer naloxone at an overdose increased from 66% pre-training to 99% post. During the 6 month follow up, 20% of police who were interviewed attended an overdose and 70% of these used naloxone to revive the person.

Naloxone kits and training were rolled out among police statewide and the evaluation has been used by police elsewhere in Australia to implement similar programs.



# Dissemination

**NDRI widely disseminates its research findings to increase awareness of drug related harm and effective prevention strategies, and to inform community debate and public health policy and practice. Research is disseminated through various means, including publications, presentations and the media, to policy makers, practitioners, public health professionals, other researchers, interest groups and the community.**

## Publications

NDRI research findings are published widely, including via refereed journal articles, reports and bulletins, which are widely circulated throughout Australia and internationally. The publication of NDRI's research findings and sharing of research expertise has played a significant role in research translating into policy and practice. NDRI also directly influences policy through frequent submissions to national and state policy bodies. NDRI researchers published more than 150 outputs in the reporting period.

## Presentations

Research findings are presented locally through the NDRI webinar series and nationally and internationally through presentations at conferences, symposia, workshops and seminars. In addition, the NDRI annual symposium, held during the reporting period, highlighted NDRI research through several high-quality presentations. During the reporting period, NDRI researchers delivered almost 100 presentations.

## Connections

*Drug and Alcohol Research Connections* is an online newsletter published jointly by NDRI and its sister organisations, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, and the National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research. *Connections* covers the latest on research and publications, news and events from the national centres, with a focus on the translation of research into policy and practice. In addition to research news and updates, in the reporting period NDRI's contributions included 'Conversation With...' articles featuring new Director Professor Paul Griffiths and retiring Professor Steve Allsop and Research Focus pieces outlining NDRI's WHO projects on preventing opioid overdose and minimising alcohol harms among adolescents. *Connections* is online at [connections.edu.au](http://connections.edu.au).

## The Conversation

The Conversation is a respected outlet that aims to share academic research and the knowledge of subject experts on topical issues. Articles published on The Conversation website during the reporting period by NDRI researchers, on topics ranging from Aboriginal kinship care, nitazene contamination and drinking trends among Generation Z, were read by an audience of more than 620,000 readers across 14 articles.

## Website

NDRI views its website, at [ndri.curtin.edu.au](http://ndri.curtin.edu.au), as the Institute's 'public face', playing a critical role in sharing research news and disseminating research findings to raise its profile and reputation and assist in putting relevant research findings in front of policy makers and practitioners. In addition, the NDRI website is the central information source for employment opportunities at the Institute as well as recruitment of participants to take part in NDRI research projects. Constant uploading of topical and useful content saw the NDRI website receive more than 2 million page views during the reporting period.

## Media

Traditional and social media remain important conduits for NDRI research to reach the community and inform policy and practice. NDRI has built a reputation as a reliable source of scientific information and expertise on a range of issues concerned with the prevention of alcohol- and drug-related harm.

NDRI received almost 1,000 mentions in traditional media, generating an audience reach of 23 million and an ASR (the equivalent of media coverage in advertising value) of \$44 million.

Subjects generating coverage during the reporting period ranged from nitrous oxide use and harms, contamination of nitazenes and alcohol-related liver disease to naloxone use, minimum unit pricing and Generation Z embracing moderation.

Traditional media was supported by NDRI continuing to increase its presence on social media as another means to disseminate research findings. Regular posting of relevant and useful content saw NDRI's following on LinkedIn, X and Facebook grow to more than 3,300. In addition, NDRI webinar recordings are posted on the Institute's YouTube channel, with NDRI's webinar content having received 11,000 views.

# APPENDIX 1

## Research Projects

### NDRI Research

The National Drug Research Institute is among the largest centres of alcohol and other drug research expertise in Australia.

Since our inception in 1986, we have conducted novel, high quality, strategic research that aims to inform Australia's response to alcohol and other drug problems at local, state and national levels.

NDRI focuses on research and other outputs that have policy and practice relevance and impact. We work in partnership and collaboration with Australian, state and local governments; with health, social and law enforcement services; and, with communities.

To ensure broad and enduring impact, capacity building is central to our work. Our researchers come from diverse backgrounds including psychology, epidemiology, biostatistics, sociology, anthropology, medicine and public health. A range of high level skills and a wealth of knowledge contribute to innovative, multi-disciplinary research approaches.

The Project Listing shows all projects researchers led or contributed to during the reporting period. Further project information can be found on NDRI's website at [ndri.curtin.edu.au](http://ndri.curtin.edu.au).

#### NDRI Key Research Priorities

NDRI's research priority areas align with the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 and are responsive to current and emerging Australian Government priorities regarding alcohol and other drugs. Our current focus is on conducting research and building capacity in the following six areas:

- Alcohol and other drug policy and strategies
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- Innovation in prevention and early intervention
- Social contexts of alcohol and other drug use
- Reducing harm among people who use alcohol and other drugs
- Innovation in the management of alcohol and other drug problems

### PROJECT LISTING (ALPHABETICAL)

A co-designed multi-component alcohol intervention for youth sport clubs

A holistic view of substance abuse amongst neurodivergent individuals as guided by the ICF: A systematic review

A new scalable eHealth approach to prevent e-cigarette use among adolescents: The OurFutures Vaping program

A Phase III randomised placebo-controlled trial of mirtazapine as a pharmacotherapy for methamphetamine ("ice") dependence

A qualitative study of alcohol, other drug use, mental health and sexuality in party going regional youth in the WA

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women perpetrators of violence: a trial of a prison-based intervention (Beyond Violence)

Alcohol and ageing in Australia: Spatiotemporal epidemiological analysis of alcohol availability's impact on use and harm among our ageing population

Alcohol policy and intervention effects in Western Australia: A joint initiative in demand-driven research

Alcohol Use in pregnancy in rural Zambia

Australian parental supply of alcohol longitudinal study (APSALS)

Best practice interventions and models of care for prevention and cessation of substance use in pregnancy and post-natal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Better data on methamphetamines and other drugs among Indigenous Australians to inform policy and practice

Building global collaboration to advance the health and human rights for women

Commonwealth illicit drug education: Positive Choices maintenance

Community alcohol sales and related problems: Filling the critical research gap

Continuing dissemination of the School Health and Alcohol Harm Reduction Project

Criminal justice outcomes of injecting drug use and methamphetamine smoking

# APPENDIX 1

## Research Projects

Determinants of prenatal alcohol exposure among Aboriginal women in the Pilbara. Developing a validated model of alcohol consumption during pregnancy for evidence-based prevention intervention development – PhD Project

Determining health needs and outcomes of key populations of people who use drugs

Drug Trends (IDRS & EDRS) – Perth arm

FASD teacher and educational setting resources 2023-2025

Healthy, wealthy and wise: The long-term effectiveness of an online universal program to prevent substance use and mental health problems among Australian youth

Impacts of Banned Drinkers Register re-introduction in Northern Territory

Improving HPV vaccine rates for Aboriginal young people through social media

International dissemination of the SHAHRP program

Intranasal naloxone for the reversal of opioid overdose: A double-blinded, double-dummy controlled non-inferiority trial in Sydney's Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

Linking for life: Enhancing pathways to wellbeing for all Australians

Making it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services to screen for risky drinking and provide tailored feedback: Adapting the Grog Survey App

Measuring alcohol risk, information needs and pathways using an AI chatbot

National Alcohol Indicators Project (NAIP)

National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)

Old enough to drink – then what? Examining alcohol consumption in a cohort with historically low levels of drinking

Online survey of small-scale domestic cannabis - Part of an international research collaboration

Paternal contribution to alcohol exposed pregnancies, and fetal and infant health

Police custody and young people: Informing human rights responses

Predicting and preventing child removals and optimising the child protection system for Aboriginal children in partnership with Aboriginal communities and health services

Primary healthcare providers' attitudes towards their role in minimising harm associated with alcohol and medication interaction in the elderly in Australia

Representation of commercial and health interests in alcohol policy processes in Australia – PhD project

Safe nights precincts triennial review

Scoping an evaluation for the minimum unit (floor) price for Western Australia

The Healthy Lifestyles program: An innovative implementation model for online interventions to prevent common and emerging risk factors for chronic disease in young Australians

The impact of Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) utilisation on health outcomes in people who inject drugs – PhD project

The life-course implications of declining adolescent drinking

The power of parents: Co-designing health communications to reduce adolescent drinking

The RADAR project: Identifying early warning signals on the pathways to alcohol use disorder

The sexual health and attitudes of Australian prisoners

Translating, modelling and evaluating cannabis policy reform in New Zealand

Treating co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness among Indigenous people released from prison will increase life expectancy, reduce incarceration and contribute to Closing the Gap

Understanding why high dropout rates exist amongst alcohol and other drug substance users during the critical first four weeks of a 12 month therapeutic community program in Western Australia – PhD Project

Violence perpetration: Profiling, prediction and prevention

Working together to reduce the harms from alcohol and other drug use in an Aboriginal community controlled primary care health context

# Our Team

## Professors

Paul Griffiths (Director)  
Steve Allsop  
Tanya Chikritzhs  
Paul Dietze  
Simon Lenton

## Associate Professors

Nyanda McBride  
Michael Livingston

## Senior Research Fellows

Fiona Farrington  
William Gilmore

## Research Fellows

Sam Colledge-Frisby  
Michael Curtis  
Jodie Grigg  
Sophie Haywood  
Annalee Stearne  
Nic Taylor  
Shelley Walker

## Senior Research Officers

Lynn Roarty

## Research Officer

Kathleen Blackburn  
Kira Button  
Jack Curran  
Sasha Moodie  
Emma Tufuga  
Emma Vieira  
Alejandra Zuluaga

## Research Assistants

Nazli Cimen  
Jazlyn East  
Lily McBride  
Taylor Mathyi  
Lena Niklasson  
Jeanie Phillips  
Maria Te Rito

## Business Services

Amna Siddiqui, Business Manager  
Jo Hawkins, Administration Officer  
Paul Jones, Computer Systems Officer  
Patricia Niklasson, Administration Officer  
Vic Rechichi, Communications Officer

## PhD Scholars

Shady Abdelsalam  
Emmanuel Mammoliti  
Amanti Baru Olanie  
Robert Shaw  
Julia Stafford  
David Tucker  
Emma Vieira

## Adjunct Appointments

David Hawks, Emeritus Professor  
Professor Tony Butler  
Professor Diana Egerton-Warburton  
Professor Ian Gilmore  
Professor Dennis Gray  
Professor Nicole Lee  
Professor Peter Miller  
Professor Tim Stockwell  
Professor Terry Slevin  
Associate Professor Michael Doyle  
Neil Donnelly, Senior Research Fellow  
Adrian Farrugia, Senior Research Fellow  
Jocelyn Jones, Senior Research Fellow  
Amy Pennay, Senior Research Fellow  
Amanda Roxburgh, Senior Research Fellow  
Seraina Agramunt, Research Fellow  
Michael Christmass, Research Fellow  
Tina Lam, Research Fellow  
Lynn Roarty, Research Fellow  
Ashleigh Stewart, Research Fellow

# Advisory Board

The NDRI Advisory Board reflects our national scope, comprising members from around Australia. Members are drawn from stakeholders including Aboriginal Australians, law enforcement, non-government services, public health, the wider community, consumers, academia and research. The role of the Advisory Board is to support and advise the Director in the effective governance of the Institute.

## Adjunct Prof Terry Slevin *(Chair)*

Chief Executive Officer  
Public Health Association Australia

## Ms Carol Daws

Chief Executive Officer  
Cyrenian House

## Mr Paul Dessauer

Chief Executive Officer  
Peer Based Harm Reduction WA

## Prof Melinda Fitzgerald

Deputy Vice Chancellor Research  
Curtin University

## Dr Alana Gall

Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Southern Cross University

## Superintendent Mark Gilbert

Nominee of the Commissioner  
Western Australia Police

## Prof Carlo Marra

Pro Vice Chancellor, Health Sciences,  
Curtin University

## Mr Steven Papadopoulos

Prevention Services Manager  
Holyoake

## Dr Jessamine Soderstrom

Emergency Physician  
Royal Perth Hospital

## Prof Paul Griffiths *(Exec. Officer)*

Director (from February 2025)  
National Drug Research Institute

## Prof Simon Lenton *(Exec. Officer)*

Director (until February 2025)  
National Drug Research Institute

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**Curtin University**