Action into Policy: How AOD data complement national surveillance systems

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Introduction: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) provides authoritative and accessible statistics and information that governments, researchers and the community can use to inform decision-making. Our work includes the management, governance and data custodianship of a number of national data sets and as of 2019–20, the Institute has 165 data sets across a diverse range of health and welfare administrative areas. The health and welfare data landscape in Australia requires collaboration across organizations and the integration of ambulance attendance data into our work is pivotal for providing a well-rounded evidence-led approach.

Approach: AIHW data are presented in reports, many of which are published on our website. These reports are available to the general public and our main stakeholders include policy makers, service providers, researchers, education providers and other government bodies. Our data are analysed with the guidance of expert working groups and reviewed to ensure accuracy.

Key Findings: Findings from National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS) are used in a range of analysis at the AIHW, including alcohol and other drug-related impacts, mental health and suicide and self-harm monitoring. The wide-ranging nature of NASS data provides key insights into the pervasiveness of related harms. In 2019, quarterly snapshots from 3 of 8 jurisdictions showed ambulances attended a total of around 10,300 incidents involving suicidal behaviours, whilst around 12,400 alcohol intoxication-related attendances were recorded.

Discussion and Conclusions: By incorporating findings from NASS into the AIHW’s analysis, including their timely and regular reporting for monitoring purposes, more insightful understanding of the pervasiveness of related impacts can be reached.