

## RESPONDING TO NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES IN THE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS SECTOR

Rita Brien<sup>1,2</sup>, Naomi Crafti<sup>1,2</sup>, Jasmin Grigg<sup>1,2</sup>, Matthew Dunn<sup>3</sup>, Victoria Manning<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. <sup>1</sup>Turning Point, Eastern Health, Melbourne, Australia. <sup>3</sup>Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

[ritab@turningpoint.org.au](mailto:ritab@turningpoint.org.au)

**Introduction:** International drug monitoring systems suggest increasing rates of acute and chronic harms associated with new psychoactive substances (NPS) use. This has implications for alcohol and other drug (AOD) services working with 'people-who-use-NPS' (PWUN). There is, however, limited understanding of workers' experience or capacity for providing interventions/support. This study explored Australian AOD workers' attitudes, experiences and self-reported knowledge/skills/confidence when responding to clients who use NPS.

**Design and Methods:** A self-selected sample of 189 Australian AOD workers completed an investigator-developed, cross-sectional online survey between February and April 2019. Descriptive quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed.

**Key findings:** Most workers (83%) reported working with PWUN, estimating NPS-use among 1-95% of service-users. Almost all workers agreed (>90%) it was important to be informed about NPS and screen for/discuss them with clients, however not all workers engaged in these activities all-of-the-time. While workers considered traditional AOD knowledge transferrable to NPS service-delivery, only 1-in-5 were 'very confident' discussing NPS or providing harm reduction advice/brief interventions. Common barriers reported were limited knowledge/access to information and training, and poor service-engagement among PWUN. Although 62% had recently accessed NPS resources, information available to AOD workers was generally considered inadequate. The cohort identified information and resources most relevant to their needs.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** This research highlights important gaps in workers' practice, knowledge and confidence responding to NPS-use. Workforce development priorities could include strategies to boost NPS practice, knowledge and confidence, such as implementing specific screening protocols and facilitating access to reliable, up-to-date information and training.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare. No grants were received from funding agencies in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors. The project was undertaken as a student requirement for completion of the Masters of Addictive Behaviours, Monash University, Australia.