

Tracing scientific and social understandings of alcohol and other drug problems over thirty-one scientific sessions of the Australian Summer School of Studies on Alcohol (1966-1997)

CLAIRE WILKINSON

¹ *Drug Policy Modelling Program, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney*

Presenter's email: c.wilkinson@unsw.edu.au

Introduction and Aims: In APSAD's 40th year it's timely to reflect on the genealogy of Australia's drug and alcohol field. Between 1966 and 1997, The University of Melbourne's Department of Medicine and St. Vincent's Hospital hosted an annual Summer School of Alcohol Studies (renamed in 1971 as the Summer School of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs and 1979 as the Autumn School of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs). The schools created a national professional and scientific forum where politicians, medical and other professionals and scientists could learn more about alcohol and later drug problems and develop a national network of interested individuals. Drawing on school material, this project traces the development of the alcohol and other drug field in Australia, focusing on the development of the professional stance to include alcohol and other drugs within the same field.

Method / Approach: Abstract booklets from the scientific sessions are held at the National Library of Australia. These list organization and individual participants, and provide participants' abstracts and full scientific papers. The analysis will present common and recurring topics and themes in these sessions and examine the framing of alcohol/drug issues.

Key Findings: The nature of societal and scientific concerns over alcohol and other drugs in Australia is considered. Patterns of approach and professional responses are described, along with the early shift toward including drugs within the symposia.

Discussions and Conclusions: The Schools present a serious effort at developing and fostering the Australian alcohol and other drug field.

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