

# Amphetamines and alcohol dominate 2013 admissions

A snapshot from the Odyssey House Annual Report for the 2012-13 financial year reveals the following drug trends:

- Amphetamine addiction was the leading problem for a record one-third of people seeking treatment - outstripping alcohol, cannabis or heroin for the second year running. Thirty-three per cent of clients cited amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) such as ice, speed or ecstasy as their principal drug of concern, an increase of 10 per cent over 2012 figures and a 120 per cent rise since 2003, when only 15 per cent of clients had an amphetamine problem.
- Alcohol was the primary drug of concern for almost one in three people (28%) entering Odyssey's residential rehabilitation programs. Seventy per cent of clients list alcohol as one of their problem drugs. Alcohol admissions have increased 33 per cent since 2003, when one in five (21%) clients cited alcohol as their primary drug of concern.
- Heroin/opiate admissions were the lowest on record at 19% in 2013 - down 21% on 2102 figures and 56% lower than 2003.
- Young people are starting to drink and misuse other drugs much earlier in life. Clients now report their average age of 'first intoxication', usually involving alcohol or cannabis, was 12-13 years of age, compared with 16-17 years of age in 2003.
- More than half (51%) of clients admitted in 2013 had a co-existing mental illness, an increase of 168 per cent since 2003 when one in five (19%) reported a mental health problem such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.
- Cannabis admissions have remained relatively stable since 2003, averaging 16 per cent of admissions each year (17% in 2013).

## The Odyssey House Corporate Luncheon - guest speaker Jennifer Westacott, CEO, Business Council of Australia

**Topic: Shared outcomes - the role of business in community wellbeing**

Jennifer Westacott, respected and well-known CEO of The Business Council of Australia (BCA) will headline the annual Odyssey House Corporate Luncheon in Sydney on Friday, 9 May.

Prior to taking up her role at BCA, Jennifer was a Director and National Lead Partner at KPMG, heading up the firm's Sustainability, Climate Change and Water practice and its NSW State Government practice. Jennifer took up the role of Chair of MHCA in January, 2013.

Jennifer has a background in policy in both public and private sectors. For over 20 years Jennifer occupied critical leadership positions in the New South Wales and Victorian Governments. She was the Director of Housing and the Secretary of Education in Victoria, and most recently was the Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.



The Business Council of Australia is an association of the chief executive officers of 100 of Australia's top companies. It was established in 1983 to provide a forum for Australia's business leadership to contribute directly to public policy debates. The BCA's vision is to advance and support policies that will help make Australia the best place in the world in which to live, learn, work and do business.

We invite you to join us for this popular event to raise funds for Odyssey House programs.

**Date:** Friday, 9 May  
**Time:** 12pm-2:30pm  
**Location:** Four Seasons Hotel, George Street, Sydney  
**Cost:** \$180 per person or \$1700 for table of 10  
**Bookings - [jessica@odysseyhouse.com.au](mailto:jessica@odysseyhouse.com.au)**



**Be comfortable with the uncomfortable**

You CAN achieve almost anything if you have the right attitude. That's the inspiring message from Paralympian (and Australia's Got Talent contender) Paul Nunnari, who addressed Odyssey House staff at our recent staff retreat. Paul shared his amazing story about overcoming adversity with sheer determination, drive and a positive attitude.

Paul has been confined to a wheelchair since he was hit by a car at the age of 11, yet he has never felt that his situation is a negative - he has viewed all he has had to endure and achieve as a positive.

Paul competed in wheelchair athletic events in three Paralympic Games - 1996 Atlanta, 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens. One of his sweetest victories was winning a silver medal at the Sydney Games.

He has also used his experiences to become a strong advocate for disability services and sport and is currently a Community Development Officer with Macarthur Disability Services.

Paul's story is truly inspirational to us all, no matter what our circumstances.

**ODYSSEY HOUSE**

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# odyssey NEWS



## Michael's Story

**As a university-educated family man with a stable upbringing and a good job, Michael seemed to have it all, yet he struggled with heroin and alcohol dependence... and hopes his second time at Odyssey House is the last.**

"As a young guy I was a 'social butterfly' and my friends were party people. In my teens we'd get drunk and experiment with drugs; at uni I smoked pot every day and took ecstasy and speed on weekends. Yet in hindsight, I've always grappled with low self-worth, and drugs were my way of trying to feel comfortable with myself.

"After gaining a social science degree I got a job assisting people with intellectual disabilities, which I enjoyed but found stressful, so when a friend offered me heroin at a party, I foolishly took it. Instantly, I was hooked and after six months I was injecting regularly.

"Then I fell in love with Nina and went on a methadone maintenance program, but was soon taking heroin along with the methadone. Even so, Nina and I had two daughters and

I managed to hide my secret from the world, but I was a 'functioning junkie'.

"Then, suddenly, life as I knew it was gone - Nina left me and didn't let me see my children, and I lost my job due to a fraud charge. I ended up staying with friends, partying, working as a truckie and selling speed.

"I managed to stop using methadone and heroin in 2007, but instead began drinking heavily and taking speed, swapping one addiction for another. I eventually had no job, and was living with people a lot younger and partying all the time.

"One day in 2010 I felt too old for that life and decided to seek help at Odyssey House. After just a few months I thought I had found my inner strength, and left the program against advice... but, in no time, I was back to drinking heavily and taking drugs occasionally.

"Life spiralled downward over the next three years: I had no stable home, had a tumultuous relationship with a meth addict, and was getting into fights that put me in hospital five times. Everyone thought I was going to die and so did I, so I entered Odyssey House again in July 2013 determined to finish.

"It's been a challenging eight months so far. Odyssey's long-term residential program provides the environment you need to deal with the deep-seated personal issues behind your addiction and really understand yourself. I can't thank Odyssey enough for helping me get my life back at age 39, better than it's ever been. I have gained self-worth and control over my life, I've reconnected with my children, and my family is relieved my drug-using life is behind me. Hopefully I'll graduate later in 2014, study further and get back into social work and helping people; that's where my passion is. I also plan to continue to build my relationship with my children and be a good dad!"

**Listen to an interview with Michael on 2UE Breakfast: <http://tinyurl.com/opqbxpt>**

**Your donation will help people like Michael overcome their addiction. Donate using envelope enclosed or online at [www.odysseyhouse.com.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.com.au)**

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## A note from the CEO's Desk

We are off to a very rapid start to the New Year, which looks to be an exciting and eventful one.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our staff, we can be confident of providing the best standard of care for our clients. This was evident at our recent staff retreat, where staff reflect on the year just passed. Our focus was on training, supporting successful recovery, managing difficult clients, self-care and the new Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (version 5), which is particularly relevant given around half our clients have a co-existing mental illness.

We take the opportunity to highlight our achievements and raise awareness of alcohol and other drug issues by publicising the Odyssey House Annual Report each year. Our 2013 Report attracted significant public interest and generated more than 150 items of media coverage in late December, reaching more than six million people. A copy of the report is at [www.odysseyhouse.com.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.com.au) and some interviews are available online, such as ABC's 7.30 (<http://tinyurl.com/mernvkb>) and ABC News 24 Breakfast and ABC Radio's AM (<http://tinyurl.com/lmb3ye4>).

In closing, I would like to say how proud I was to be nominated for Australian of the Year! It was a great honour for which I will be forever grateful!

**James A Pitts, CEO**

## Behind the Scenes at Odyssey

Did you know the Odyssey House kitchens serve 400 meals a day, providing breakfast, morning tea, lunch, dinner and snacks every day to more than 100 residents? That's 146,000 meals a year, prepared in industrial-sized kitchens: one at the main residential facility at Eagle Vale and another at Robin Hood Farm in Minto, where the Assessment & Referral Centre and Milton Luger Withdrawal Unit are located.

Residents work in the kitchens as part of their 'job function' within the therapeutic community, with a staff member overseeing operations. Between five and eight residents are rostered to each kitchen at a time and do everything from planning menus, ordering food, managing stock, and ensuring hygiene and occupational health and safety requirements are met, to preparing, cooking, cleaning, and serving food.

Only 30 per cent of clients have worked in the six months prior to admission and often lived unstructured lives without significant responsibility or life skills. Through their work at Odyssey House, clients learn practical skills as well as decision-



making, problem-solving, teamwork, negotiation and empathy. They learn to get up at a regular time each morning, be productive, meet deadlines, accept and give instruction and guidance, and take responsibility.

Feeding 100 people nutritious meals every day requires large quantities of food, and Odyssey House is fortunate to have the support of organisations such as Oz Harvest, which delivers fresh food weekly, free of charge.

Both kitchens will soon receive a much-needed upgrade, thanks to the generous response to the Odyssey House Christmas Kitchen Appeal, which raised \$12,000. This will be supplemented by \$30,000 from the annual ICAP Charity Day, a worldwide philanthropic initiative of the world's leading interdealer broker and provider of post trade, risk mitigation and information services (see [www.icapcharityday.com](http://www.icapcharityday.com)).

## Odyssey House's Milton Luger Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit: Safely managing withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs

Withdrawing or 'detoxing' from any significant drug dependency may pose health risks if not managed by a healthcare professional.

It is a common misconception that heroin is the most difficult drug to withdraw from, yet the symptoms of opioid withdrawal are akin to influenza. In fact, alcohol and benzodiazepines (prescription sedatives) cause the most serious side effects during withdrawal; if not medically supervised, patients may suffer seizures, convulsions, cramps, vomiting, delusions and hallucinations.

Other side effects of withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs include tremors, sweating, nausea, confusion, irritability, anxiety and cravings. Undiagnosed mental illness may also become evident once drug use ceases, or may arise temporarily due to withdrawal. For example, withdrawal from amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) such as ice, speed and ecstasy may trigger rebound depression, paranoid or suspicious thoughts, agitation and sleep disorders; this complicates treatment and may cause people to stop treatment prematurely.

All prospective Odyssey House clients are evaluated to determine whether they need to enter our withdrawal unit to safely start their treatment, or may enter the main residential rehabilitation program directly.

Odyssey House's Milton Luger Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit is a modern facility built in 1999 at Robin Hood Farm at Minto in Sydney's west. Named in honour of one of the program's founders, the unit won the Excellence in Treatment Award at the 2005 National Drug and Alcohol Awards and annually assists around 320 men and women to safely withdraw from alcohol and other drugs.

The residential withdrawal program lasts seven to ten days and starts with a doctor's assessment to

determine a treatment regimen, including medications as necessary, to manage likely withdrawal symptoms and existing medical conditions. (Methadone maintenance and 'rapid detox' are not provided.)

Qualified nurses staff the unit around the clock, a visiting doctor supervises treatment, and social workers provide support, under the direction of Odyssey House's Chief Clinical Officer. Participants undertake counselling and are taught relaxation techniques and relapse prevention strategies.

Although state-of-the-art, the unit does not resemble a hospital. Rather, it is a therapeutic community with dormitory-style bedrooms and communal living areas. Clients (up to 12 at any one time) are expected to interact with and support each other.

Aside from physical withdrawal symptoms, the first weeks of treatment are often the most difficult emotionally, when people have to confront life, control their behaviour and experience their feelings without the drug/s they were misusing - often for the first time in many years. The supportive, controlled environment provided at Odyssey House assists clients to start dealing with their emotions, persevere with the process and adhere to their treatment plan.

After completing detox, clients are referred to services most suited to their rehabilitation needs, such as out-patient counselling, support groups or residential treatment. Up to two-thirds of Withdrawal Program clients transfer into the Odyssey House Residential Rehabilitation Program to undertake the long-term process of dealing with the personal issues that led them to misuse drugs, and developing life skills to remain drug-free.



## A message from the Chairman

Demand for our services remains high, so I am very pleased to report a number of improvements following a total review of our program services with input from staff and residents. As a result, operations and processes have been improved at our Admissions and Intake Centre, Withdrawal Unit, Residential Program and After Care. These initiatives have resulted in a higher utilisation of our facilities and fewer people dropping out of the program, and have made a real difference to people who seek our support. Further improvements and extensions to services are planned in 2014.

The federal government's move in November 2013 to de-fund the sector's peak body, the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), has created some uncertainty in the sector, but government funding of treatment services is unaffected. We are supported by various grants from the NSW and federal governments.

However, as always, we do rely on private donations to meet the shortfall between government funding and our costs, and to meet the ongoing costs of maintenance and improvements to the facilities.

I encourage you to continue to support us this year, such as by attending our fundraising events, providing goods or services, or donating through workplace giving.

**Doug Snedden, Chairman**

## From the Fundraising Desk

Welcome to the first edition of Odyssey News for 2014!

This year is a particularly special one - it's our 37th year of operation and our CEO, James Pitts, will celebrate 30 years of service to Odyssey House. We will also have a number of fundraising activities throughout the year - keep an eye out for details in our newsletter and on our website.

## Can you help us?

How you can help!

Like any large family home that's constantly occupied, it's inevitable that things break, wear out or need to be replaced at Odyssey House facilities.

You may like to donate directly towards the purchase of one of these items or you may be able to provide the goods pro bono - either way we would welcome your contribution. Here's a list of some of our specific needs:

- Carpeting throughout the main facility, including bedrooms and counselling rooms
- 7 lounges for counselling rooms
- 40 chairs for the general meeting room, where all residents come together for group meetings and counselling
- Alarms for the doors of the Parents' and Children's Cottages
- Shading at the Cottages
- 4 Android tablets for the children in the Cottages
- 1 laptop for the Cottage
- 2 flat screen TVs for the Cottages
- 2 modular lounges for the Cottages
- 6 clotheslines

**For more information, please contact Alexandra Macaulay, Fundraising and Marketing Manager, [alexandra@odysseyhouse.com.au](mailto:alexandra@odysseyhouse.com.au) or 02 8796 9970.**

## AIC has moved!

The Odyssey House Admissions and Intake Centre has now moved from Surry Hills to a new office in Redfern (with thanks to the team at Tim Green Commercial who assisted with the property and fit out).

If you or a loved one are struggling with drug dependence and would like help or more information, we are now up and running and taking admissions, so please contact the new Admissions & Intake Centre (no referral is necessary):

Level 1, 61 Renwick Street

Redfern NSW 2016

Ph: 02 9281 5144

## Workplace Giving

Workplace Giving is a three-way partnership between employees, employers and charities. It creates positive and lasting relationships and brings compelling benefits to all involved:

- Enables employees to donate from their pre-tax pay and is tax deductible.
- Benefits employers by demonstrating good corporate social responsibility and boosting employee morale.
- Helps Odyssey House by providing stable long-term funding and a lasting relationship with you as the donor.

How can I get involved in Workplace Giving?

Odyssey House has partnered with Good2Give for Workplace Giving.

Check with your employer to see if they participate in Workplace Giving using the Good2Give service. If they do, all you need to do is nominate Odyssey House as the charity you wish to donate to. If not, contact Good2Give to arrange Workplace Giving - <http://www.cafaustralia.org.au/contact-us.htm>

