



**Methamphetamine addiction the biggest drug problem for seventh year running
Rehab numbers hit record high as 54% seek treatment for drugs like 'ice'**

2018 Odyssey House NSW Annual Report

The devastating impact of 'ice' shows no signs of slowing, with methamphetamine the leading drug problem for the seventh year running according to a report by Odyssey House NSW, which is one of Australia's largest alcohol and other drug treatment services and helps people from around the country.

Released today, the *2018 Odyssey House NSW Annual Report* shows a record 54 per cent of residential rehabilitation clients in the 2017-18 financial year named methamphetamine-type drugs (e.g. 'ice' or crystal meth, speed, base) as their principal drug of concern*. This is up 10.2 per cent on 2017 admissions (49% of clients) and up 80 per cent on 2012 (30% of clients), when methamphetamine replaced alcohol at the number one position.

Odyssey House NSW CEO Julie Babineau[†] said methamphetamine was also the main concern for 36 per cent of people undertaking treatment at Odyssey House's eleven new community services. These facilities opened across Sydney in 2017 to provide free non-residential counselling and support to individuals and their families impacted by alcohol and other drug use and mental illness.

"The demand for our services continues to grow due to the increased use of methamphetamines and prescription drugs and the ongoing impact of alcohol, cannabis and heroin on not only the individuals, but their families and communities," Ms Babineau said.

"In particular, 'ice' can rapidly have serious adverse impacts on people's personal lives and their physical and mental health, and most find it very difficult to stop using the drug without help. Some people quickly spiral downwards; others may be able to sustain a relatively normal life for a while before they or their families reach out for help.

"**Alcohol** remains a significant problem, named by one in five (20%) Odyssey House residential services clients as their principal drug of concern in 2018 (22% in 2017). In our community services, one in three (29%) clients cited alcohol as their main drug of concern.

"Excessive or non-medical use of **prescription opioids** like fentanyl or oxycodone accounted for 3 per cent of our residential admissions in 2018, up from 1.3 per cent in 2017. In our community services, 2.1 per cent of clients named prescription opioids as their principal drug of concern.

"These figures are currently quite low, but there's rising public health concern here and overseas about increases in poisoning and overdoses from prescription opioids[‡]. We are keeping an eye on the situation and we're ready to help if and when more people reach out for treatment.

"People may not realise their drug use is problematic, don't recognise how it's impacting on them or others, or they don't want to admit to 'an addiction' because of the public stigma still attached to this treatable health condition," she said.

“Regardless of their drug of concern, we encourage people to **get treatment sooner rather than later**, such as in the community while they continue their day-to-day lives, or in our residential withdrawal unit or rehabilitation program.

“Our message at Odyssey House is: Don’t wait until your drug use is having severe negative consequences for you and your family, such as job loss, relationship breakdowns or physical or mental health problems. With some drugs, such as strong prescription painkillers or heroin, the first major consequence may actually be life-threatening.

“Overcoming alcohol and other drug dependence and rebuilding your life requires significant effort, time and assistance, but you’re not alone and the benefits are well worth the investment.

“Government at all levels acknowledge that alcohol and other drug dependence is a health and social issue, and while funding is modest, the policy direction is welcome,” Ms Babineau said.

Federal and NSW government **funding** accounted for 71 per cent of Odyssey House’s income in 2017-18, with 29 per cent raised through philanthropy, in-kind support and treatment costs.

During the financial year, Odyssey House NSW assisted **2276 people**: 678 in its renowned residential rehabilitation program and 1598 through its new community services. Men accounted for 70 per cent of clients; 13 per cent of clients identified as Indigenous.

Odyssey House’s programs help clients overcome drug use disorders, deal with underlying personal issues, manage mental illness, develop coping strategies, learn practical life skills (e.g. parenting, anger management, job-seeking, communication skills), prevent relapse and access other support.

More than 40,000 people have been assisted to overcome dependence on alcohol and other drugs since Odyssey House NSW opened in 1977.

Odyssey House NSW residential withdrawal and rehabilitation services are based in south-western Sydney. Odyssey House has 11 community-based treatment services around greater Sydney:

- Central and Eastern Sydney region: Redfern, Canterbury
- South Western Sydney region: Campbelltown, Fairfield, Bowral, Tahmoor
- Western Sydney region: Blacktown, Doonside
- Sydney North region: Chatswood, Manly, Pymble.

Contact Odyssey House on 1800 397 739 or visit www.odysseyhouse.com.au for information and general advice on residential services, community services, aftercare, Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment and other support.

For interviews with CEO Julie Babineau or an Odyssey House graduate (conditions apply):

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See the Odyssey House Media Dropbox for a copy of the 2018 Annual Report and other resources:

<https://tinyurl.com/OdysseyHouseNSW>

* Many Odyssey House clients have poly-drug problems, but nominate one drug as their main reason for seeking treatment

† Babineau is pronounced BAB-inn-oh

‡ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018, *Opioid harm in Australia and comparisons between Australia and Canada*. Cat. no. HSE 210. Canberra: AIHW.