

## ANCD urges Australians to share their Positive Stories—August 2008

The Australian National Council on Drugs is urging people across Australia who have overcome problems with alcohol or drugs to submit stories to the “Positive Stories” project to inspire others. People across Australia who have overcome issues with alcohol or drugs are being urged to submit their stories to a major initiative to inspire people to realise that drug and alcohol treatment works.



The ANCD is highlighting that hundreds of thousands of Australians now have problems with alcohol with around 2 million Australians drinking at risky or high risk levels for longterm harm<sup>[1]</sup> and around 300,000 people using cannabis regularly<sup>[2]</sup>. The “Positive Stories” initiative is designed to get people to realise that they can beat substance misuse problems.

People across Australia who have beaten problems with alcohol or drugs are being urged to share their stories with the nation, to help inspire others to realise that treatment works.

“Positive Stories” is a major initiative from the Australian National Council on Drugs.

The ANCD highlights that currently hundreds of thousands of Australians now have problems with alcohol with statistics showing alcohol abuse is costing Australia over \$15 billion a year. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates around 2 million Australians drink at risky or high risk levels for longterm harm<sup>1</sup>. Figures also show thousands of Australians have issues with illicit drugs. Statistics show around 300,000 people using cannabis regularly<sup>2</sup>.

ANCD Chairman Dr. John Herron said, “This project is an Australian first. It’s all about positives. It’s all about inspiring others. There is a view in society that you cannot get out of the trap of substance abuse. That’s just not true – and thousands of people around the nation who have become clean or sober have disproved that idea. There’s too much stereotyping going on in society. We have to break through that.”

“The idea that “once a drug user, always a drug user” or “once a drinker, always a drinker” just isn’t true. People — through treatment — do beat their problems and move on with their lives. If you know somebody who is struggling, urge them to take action. Every journey starts with one step. Everyone has the potential to overcome their problems.”

The Honourable Nicola Roxon — Minister for Health and Ageing — said, “There are thousands of Australians who struggle with substance abuse. This project is important because it has the potential to inspire these people to turn their lives around.”

“Positive Stories has been developed to clearly demonstrate that help is available — and that it is possible to become drug-free. The Government is committed to tackling drug and alcohol abuse, and hopefully this project can play a part in helping us to meet that challenge.”

Anyone who wants to submit a story about their success in beating alcohol or drugs to the “Positive Stories” project should simply go to [www.positivestories.org.au](http://www.positivestories.org.au). Published stories are ultimately anonymous so that people who have submitted a story cannot be identified by others.

People who currently have problems with either alcohol or illicit drugs are also being urged to visit the “Positive Stories” website to see many inspirational stories from real people who have battled major issues.

The “Positive Stories” website also contains details on agencies across the nation — in all states and territories — who can offer support, assistance and information about getting treatment.

Dr. John Herron said, “We’ve received many remarkable stories for the site. We’ve had stories of people who have experimented with everything from speed and cocaine to heroin and then ended up prostituting themselves and in jail to one woman who was using alcohol, marijuana and speed with her whole life (and that of her young son) in ruins until she sought treatment and turned her life around.”

Executive Director of the ANCD Gino Vumbaca said, “The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that tens of thousands of people sought treatment in 2005–06 in Australia. These figures do not even include results from all treatment agencies, such as methadone programs or self-help groups. We are seeing some great results from treatment. Right now alcohol is the main reason for people entering treatment — accounting for the majority of treatment episodes in 2005–2006.”

“The encouraging aspect is that so many people are now seeking treatment. On top of this there are thousands and thousands of people going to self-help groups such as Alcoholics & Narcotics Anonymous. We believe that if the public was more aware of the real level of alcohol dependence in our community, they would be lot more vocal in their support for treatment services.”

Dr. John Herron added, “Most people who have a problem with addiction or substance abuse want to stop. Often they are not sure how to. They don’t know where to go to get help. We urge people to go to [www.positivestories.org.au](http://www.positivestories.org.au) because the site will highlight that there are many dedicated people out there ready to offer treatment for people who want to do something about their drug and alcohol problems.”

“Thousands and thousands of Australians are in treatment programs, tackling issues with addiction and substance misuse. There is a remarkable range of agencies out there whose main goal is to simply help people out of the web of issues they are facing... and help them to rebuild their lives.”

Anyone wanting to submit a story (which will be published in a manner to protect your identity and privacy) or read many inspirational stories from people who have been on big journeys with alcohol or drugs should go to [www.positivestories.org.au](http://www.positivestories.org.au).

*August 2008*

---

Media enquiries to Media Key on 03 9769 6488. Ask for Ross Woodward/Danyel Walker.

People who’ve beaten problems — or people who want inspiration on how to beat problems — should just visit [www.positivestories.org.au](http://www.positivestories.org.au)

[1] Source: 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

[2] Source: 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

