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People in Australia who have had issues with alcohol and drugs and beaten their problems are being urged to submit their stories to a major new project to inspire others.

The project — Positive Stories — is believed to be an Australian first. The Positive Stories website will feature stories of people who are tackling or have beaten their drug and alcohol problems. The principal advisory body to government — The Australian National Council on Drugs — is coordinating the initiative.

People in Australia who have had issues with drugs and alcohol and beaten their problems are being urged to submit their stories to a new project being coordinated by the principal advisory body to government, the Australian National Council on Drugs.

The appeal comes as the Australian National Council on Drugs, with the assistance of the Hon Tony Abbott, Minister for Health & the Hon Julia Gillard, Opposition Spokesperson for Health, launches a major new website — Positive Stories — aimed at people in Australia who have issues with drugs or alcohol and their families. It's believed the project is an Australian first.

The website — located at www.ancd.org.au/positivestories [Now at: www.positivestories.org.au] is designed to inspire people to realise they can beat their problems. The website is also designed to encourage people to realise help is available in many areas of Australia for people trying to battle with their problems.

Major Brian Watters — who worked extensively with The Salvation Army for many years in a frontline role with drug and alcohol issues — is helping the ANCD promote the campaign. He said, “We want to hear from people who have a story to tell that will inspire others because this website is all about positives. We are certain the website will encourage people to realise that you can beat addiction. Over the years I have met and counselled so many addicts who thought they would never get out of the trap — but they do. We want to send a message to people in difficult situations to say others have done it, you can too.”

Cynthia Morton is one of the people helping to promote the new website and the search for more inspirational stories. Cynthia is herself a remarkable story. She was sexually abused by her father and a next-door neighbour for many years when she was a child. She spent her childhood wanting to run away. Cynthia is now a highly successful Chief Executive of The Emotional Fitness Foundation that supports people who have been abused as well as an exhibited painter and successful public speaker.

Cynthia Morton said, “Alcohol and drugs were a huge part of my life for a very long time. By the time I was 19 I had a daily drug habit. Much of my first marriage involved drugs and alcohol. I was regularly using speed, marijuana, cask wine and tequila and I was going through a lot of substances. I was a wreck — and a mother of two young sons. I decided at the age of 33 the madness had to stop and with help I've managed to beat alcohol and drugs. There are people are out there to help you beat the emotional sharks that can destroy you.”

Cynthia Morton added, “I've now helped over 4,000 people struggling with addiction and abuse issues. The

Australian National Council on Drugs wants people to realise you can break the stranglehold that alcohol and drugs can have over you.”

Major Brian Watters said, “There’s simply far too much stereotyping going on in our society. Some people seem to think ‘once a drug user, always a drug user’. It’s nonsense. People do overcome their problems. You can get clean and sober. We want to highlight that treatment works. Drug users are entitled to receive treatment — and it’s unquestionably worth the investment.”

Gino Vumbaca — who is the Executive Officer of the ANCD — added “We already have over 50 remarkable stories on the website. We want more so we’d like to hear from people who can submit a story about what they’ve been through to inspire others who may be struggling. Most drug users do want to stop — but sometimes they are not sure how and where to get help. This site will show that there are a lot of dedicated and committed people out there ready to offer a range of treatment and assistance for people wanting to do something about their drug and alcohol problems.”

“We also want people to realise that this site is something families and friends of drug users would find very helpful because they can get inspiration and encourage people who need help to look at the resource, as well as find help for themselves.”

Major Brian Watters added, “The drug scene is continuing to change — as new drugs take hold such as ecstasy. Understandably people often think ‘it will never happen to my child’ but of course it can. Dabbling in drugs can quickly lead to an addiction that is all consuming. Alcohol can create huge issues for people — and some people can end up getting addicted without ever meaning to. Teenage binge drinking is another big issue because research shows teenage binge drinkers may slip into drug use later on. As a society it’s not just dealing with heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and the many other drugs that’s the issue. Alcohol is causing massive damage running into billions of dollars. Tens of thousands of Australians drink at dangerous and harmful levels.”

“We’ve received many remarkable stories for the new 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 an alcohol, marijuana and speed addict and whose life (with a young son) was in ruins until she cleaned herself up and turned her life around.”

Cynthia Morton added, “I grew up in a middle class family and everything on the outside looked like a ‘Ken and Barbie’ dolls house. Inside though my father was a violent alcoholic and incest was a constant part of life in our home. It was hard to stop all the drugs and alcohol but the emotional sharks in my life had to be dealt with.”

The new website project not only aims to have stories from people who have successfully dealt with or are dealing with their drug issues, but also information from managers and workers highlighting the positives of treatment as well as stories from families who have supported family members.

Anyone wanting to e-mail a story should send the story to neill@ncd.org.au or mail the story to Positive Stories, ANCD, PO Box 1552, Canberra, ACT, 2601. The website will be live from June 21 and is located at www.ncd.org.au/positivestories [Now at: www.positivestories.org.au].

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The ANCD is the principal advisory body to Government on drug and alcohol issues.

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