



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUPPORT FOR HARMFUL DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE AVAILABLE DURING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

A range of resources to support LGBTQ people experiencing harmful alcohol and drug use during the COVID-19 pandemic has been developed by ACON, NSW's leading health organisation specialising in sexuality and gender diverse health.

The resources, including blog posts and factsheets, will be available on Pivot Point, ACON's dedicated online resource for alcohol and drug (AOD) use, which links members of LGBTQ communities to health information and support services. The resources will also be shared across ACON's social media channels.

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said: "In these uncertain times, we recognise that some members of our communities may be finding the current situation challenging and overwhelming. Compounding these emotions are requirements for physical distancing and self-isolation. These resources have been developed to assist those who may be experiencing harms with their alcohol and other drug use during this current period, and to provide them with appropriate health information and access to support services."

"We also understand that sexualised drug use is practiced by some members of our communities, which for some may become harmful especially during this time. It's vital we remind people of the importance of heeding public health advice around physical distancing. Although COVID-19 is not a sexually transmitted infection, physical contact during sex carries a high risk of transmission. With these resources, we aim to raise further awareness of the specific risks associated with sexualised drug use, and of the strategies that can be adopted to minimise harm."

Factsheets to be released over the next two weeks will provide advice related to alcohol and other drug use with a particular focus on harm reduction and COVID-19 prevention. These resources will take into account the various ways in which sexuality and gender diverse people use alcohol and other drugs, and offer advice and guidance around how best to stay safe, prevent COVID-19 transmission and seek support throughout this period of social distancing. ACON's substance support counselling service and needle and syringe programs will remain operational and resources will encourage ACON's communities to make use of these services should they require.

Further to resources being disseminated by ACON, the Stimulant Treatment Program at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney is conducting a research trial on the effectiveness of their S-Check App. The S-Check App has been designed to help community members understand and manage their stimulant use and remain connected to support services.

Professor Nadine Ezard, Director of the St Vincent's Hospital Drug and Alcohol program and National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs, said: "It is vital that we provide accessible and flexible digital interventions that aim to assist people to understand and monitor their use of stimulants and the associated risks."

The S-Check App is now available for download and ACON will work in partnership with St Vincent's and other stakeholders to support recruitment for the S-Check trial over the coming months.

Parkhill added: "With these resources, we aim to provide our communities with accessible information so that they can make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. We want to remind everyone that support, and assistance is there for those who need it."

Visit Pivot Point at pivotpoint.org.au.

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