

Submission from Moreland Hall for the Federal Government's Australia 2020 Summit

UnitingCare Moreland Hall (Moreland Hall) would like to firstly thank the Federal Government for the opportunity to give some comment about areas of importance to the nation, through the 2020 Submission process. We believe that it is important that the Government is open to voices and new ideas from the public about things that affect all Australians.

We also want to offer our support for the latest Council of Australian Government's initiative asking the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy to report to them after looking at options for reducing binge drinking including examining closing hours, responsible service of alcohol, and secondary supply, as well as mandatory health warnings on packaged alcohol. Moreland Hall believes all these options are worth consideration by Government as means to reduce the levels of problematic alcohol use that occur in the community.

Moreland Hall have been operating as an alcohol and other drug agency for over thirty years, offering treatment to thousands of people in that time. From the many years of experience we have had in this field, we want to emphasise to the Government and to the delegates of the Summit a number of points.

Firstly, the recent focus by Government and in the media on the issue of binge drinking, particularly amongst youth, but also in the wider population, is to be applauded and supported. Binge drinking is a very significant problem in our society, with links to family violence, aggression, drink-driving and other harmful behaviours that have a huge impact on many people. Moreland Hall supports strategies by Government and others to reduce the harmful impact of excessive alcohol use.

Moreland Hall also want to encourage amongst the public an increased awareness of the complexity of the issues that many of our clients face: not only alcohol and drug issues, but mental health issues, unemployment, homelessness and many others. In particular, the connections between mental illness and problematic drug use are finally starting to be recognised by policy makers and the public, which is overdue, and we welcome initiatives around Dual Diagnosis and supporting appropriate treatments that take account of both alcohol and other drug and mental health issues.

Moreland Hall would like to remind Governments and the public that our clients are, first and foremost, individual people, not just walking 'caseloads' or 'problems'. And they are people who also have families: children, partners, parents, siblings, many of whom are affected by those alcohol and drug issues as much as the client, and for whom support is only starting to become available for. We would encourage Governments to support programs that are holistic, that address and support the wider family in the context of alcohol and drug problems, and that help to reduce the stigma suffered not only by those individuals but by their families as well.