

5.3 Primary drug of concern analysis

This paper presents an overview of ‘Primary Drug of Concern’ data across the 4 catchments of Inner North Melbourne, North Melbourne, North West Melbourne and South West Melbourne. The data has been collected from intake and assessment during the time that it was still centralised (March 2015-2016 and March 2016-2017) and so reflects all clients who accessed reformed adult services during these times. The data does not include other service providers, residential or youth programs.

Across our total dataset, ice has now surpassed alcohol as the most commonly reported primary drug of concern. When we combine the rates for Ice and Alcohol, it accounts for about 2/3rds of our total client group’s primary drugs of concern. One of the most significant changes in this year’s data has been the overall increase in clients presenting with GHB as their primary drug of concern (PDOC). In 3 of the 4 catchments, it is now the 5th most commonly reported; after the very steady ‘top 4’. In the 2015/16 data GHB was named as PDOC for 24 clients, in this 2016/17 data set that figure has increased almost 300% to 93 clients. It is understood that GHB is often used alongside other drugs, but for it to be increasing so rapidly as the main reason for seeking treatment is significant. This will have implications for service provision, client education and detox approaches.

The following tables analyse each catchment specifically, showing the 10 most commonly listed Primary Drugs of Concern for 2016/17, alongside the trend in comparison to last year’s data.

Top 4 primary drugs of concern

Ice 33.7% (↑ from 30.6%)

Alcohol 30.9% (↓ from 33.2%)

Marijuana 13.5% (↓ from 14.6%)

Heroin 9.8% (↓ from 10.5%)

Data notes:

Where there was some uncertainty of inconsistency around the forms of a substance that were recorded they have been rolled together into a broader category:

- Methamphetamine includes all forms of the amphetamine type substances, ice, speed, etc.
- Cannabis and cannabinoids relates to all forms of that substance.
- Benzodiazepines includes alprazolam, diazepam, clonazepam, nitrazepam, temazepam, etc.
- Semi synthetic opioid analgesics includes buprenorphine and oxycodone (endone).

Inner North Melbourne

In the Inner North we can see that the rates for alcohol, methamphetamine and cannabis have all fallen slightly, while all other most commonly report substances have risen slightly. The most significant increase has been in clients seeking help for GHB, a rise from 0.4% to 2.0%, in client numbers that's an increase from 8 people, to 35.

Substance	Number of clients	% of clients	Trend	2015/16
Alcohol	558	32.4%	↓	34.0%
Methamphetamine	489	28.4%	↓	28.8%
Cannabis & cannabinoids	226	13.1%	↓	14.4%
Heroin	197	11.4%	↑	10.6%
GHB	35	2.0%	↑	0.4%
Benzodiazepines	16	0.9%	↑	0.8%
Semi synthetic opioid analgesics	16	0.9%	↑	0.5%
Methadone	14	0.8%	↑	0.5%
Cocaine	13	0.8%	↑	0.6%
Inadequately Described	136	7.9%	↑	6.6%

North Melbourne

The rate of clients seeking AOD treatment for methamphetamine in the North catchment has increased slightly since last year, while alcohol, cannabis and heroin have all fallen. Again we see the most significant increase in GHB (from 0.2% of clients last year (<5 clients) to 1.9% this year (27 clients)).

Methamphetamine	471	32.7%	↑	32.2%
Alcohol	463	32.1%	↓	37.2%
Cannabis & cannabinoids	210	14.6%	↓	16.5%
Heroin	112	7.8%	↓	9.2%
GHB	27	1.9%	↑	0.2%
Opioid analgesic (includes morphine, codeine)	26	1.8%	↑	0.7%
Benzodiazepines	15	1.0%	↑	0.7%
Nicotine	12	-		-
Cocaine	9	0.6%	↑	0.5%
Inadequately Described	83	5.8%	↑	4.2%

North West Melbourne

There have been some significant fluctuations in the proportions of reported primary drugs of concern in the North West. Alcohol has fallen from 30.2% to 24.0%, in real numbers last year 695 clients in the North West reported Alcohol as their primary drug of concern, this year that number was 440. Cannabis and heroin have also fallen. Methamphetamine has increased slightly in terms of the proportion of the client base, but it's actually fewer clients, due to a drop in client numbers in this catchment.

Methamphetamine	689	37.6%	↑	37.2%
Alcohol	440	24.0%	↓	30.2%
Cannabis & cannabinoids	204	11.1%	↓	14.5%
Heroin	179	9.8%	↓	13.5%
GHB	26	1.4%	↑	0.4%
Opioid analgesic (includes morphine, codeine)	23	1.3%	↑	0.5%
Semi synthetic opioid analgesics	14	0.8%	↑	0.2%
Benzodiazepines	12	0.7%	→	0.7%
Cocaine	7	0.4%	→	0.4%
Inadequately Described	223	12.2%	↑	8.8%

South West Melbourne

There have been some significant fluctuations in the proportions of reported primary drugs of concern in the North West. Alcohol has fallen from 30.2% to 24.0%, in real numbers last year 695 clients in the North West reported Alcohol as their primary drug of concern, this year that number was 440. Cannabis and heroin have also fallen. Methamphetamine has increased slightly in terms of the proportion of the client base, but it's actually fewer clients, due to a drop in client numbers in this catchment.

Alcohol	286	32.9%	↓	36.2%
Methamphetamine	270	31.0%	↓	39.4%
Cannabis & cannabinoids	139	16.0%	↑	13.7%
Heroin	77	8.9%	↑	6.6%
Opioid analgesic (includes morphine, codeine)	12	1.4%	↑	0.7%
GHB	5	0.6%	↑	0.3%
Benzodiazepines	4	0.5%	↓	0.7%
Fentanyl / tramadol	4	0.5%	↓	0.7%
Semi synthetic opioid analgesics	4	0.5%	↑	0.3%
Inadequately Described	61	7.0%	↑	3.8%