

## ACCEPTABILITY AND COST REDUCTION ESTIMATES OF A MANAGED ALCOHOL PROGRAM FOR SYDNEY'S HOMELESS POPULATION

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**Introduction and Aims:** Alcohol dependence affects around half of Sydney's homeless. Managed Alcohol Programs (MAPs) are a novel approach for delivering health and social services to this population. MAPs operate in homeless shelters and involve dispensing a regulated amount of alcohol at set times to those with severe alcohol dependence. This study examined the feasibility of establishing a MAP in Sydney.

**Design and Methods:** We conducted a sequential survey of homeless alcohol dependent inner Sydney residential withdrawal service users, and made cost and savings estimates based on the international literature.

**Results:** Of the 51 participants (94% male, median age 45 years), 45% were sleeping rough and 94% drank on the street. The majority indicated a strong interest in a MAP with a preference for the residential model with the option to bring your own alcohol (76%) or be provided with it (69%); 90% were willing to pay at least 25% of their income for a residential facility where alcohol was provided.

**Discussion and Conclusions:** Findings suggest that the target population would be willing to use a MAP. A 15-bed residential facility was estimated conservatively to reduce service utilisation costs of \$480,000 per year (range \$390,000-\$580,000).

**Implications for Practice or Policy** (optional): Establishment of a MAP may herald an important policy shift in addressing the complex needs of homeless people with severe alcohol dependence. A pilot MAP, commencing with stakeholder engagement, is recommended.

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