

## **Injecting drug use among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) people is a critical and emerging issue**

Historically drug dependence among Aboriginal peoples has been most documented among people who use alcohol and cannabis, with much of the focus of harm reduction programs being steered to these two issues. However there is evidence and growing concern about a rise in injecting drug use within Aboriginal communities, including in more remote areas of Australia. Most compelling are the higher rates of notifications of hepatitis C infection, higher levels of needle syringe program access, higher participation in opiate substitution programs and higher proportions of HIV incidence due to injecting drug use among Aboriginal Australians compared to non-Indigenous Australians – leading to the potential for HIV infection to rapidly increase within the community because of unsafe injecting drug use. Drawing on recently conducted research among Aboriginal people who inject drugs in Australia, this presentation will explore issues of service delivery, risk behaviours associated with Aboriginal people who inject drugs, cultural connectedness, emerging injection drug issues, dependence, and models of care specific for Aboriginal people. Finally this presentation will explore issues for similar global indigenous populations, and discuss ways forward to reduce harm related to injecting drug use in Aboriginal communities.

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