

## **2015 James Rankin Oration - Where the spirit meets the bone: An addiction medicine perspective on drug and alcohol in Australia**

While the drug and alcohol field usually conceptualises drug and alcohol or addiction problems from a broad health perspective and considers health responses important, other key sectors in society conceptualise and respond to drug and alcohol issues from vastly different perspectives. For example, both current community concerns and Federal responses to problematic methamphetamine use appear focus on public education and fear campaigns and law and order responses (e.g. 'dob in a dealer'). Given Australia's well developed drug and alcohol research and treatment sectors, the lack of a sound evidence base for policy responses remains disconcerting.

An evidence based model has been developed to calculate optimal level of drug and alcohol service provision at state levels, but this model has not been adopted nationally, and only a minority of states appear to be considering using an evidence based approach like this to planning for the sector.

Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in most drug and alcohol treatment admissions, yet typically policy responses fail to recognise the need to proactively address the needs of this population. For example, the dialogue around 'Closing the Gap' recognises drug and alcohol issues as contributors to the social determinants of health, but adequate resourcing of specialist, generalist and community-controlled treatment services to respond to these issues is not being openly considered.

In this oration I will reflect on the perspective of a clinician/researcher/policy advisor on developments in the drug and alcohol field over the past two decades and consider key challenges for the field in the coming years.