

Social Determinants and Substance Use: A perspective beyond the policy 'silo' pragmatics

*By Shane Varcoe, National Training & Partnerships Officer, Dalgarno Institute, and
Derek Steenholdt, Research Officer, Dalgarno Institute*

*Editor's note: Due to the length of this paper, we are featuring only the abstract and provide
the link to the full paper at the end.*

Abstract

The factors which have influenced the uptake of illicit drug use in advanced and developing countries can be traced back to shifts away from traditional moral principles and changes in ethical attitudes relating to personal versus government responsibilities through significant changes in government policies as much as a century ago. (Etzioni 1996). These changes towards amoral approaches to social issues and greater government responsibility for personal health issues have influenced the language we use to describe the influence of illicit drugs on human behaviour, preferring to explain the harms resulting from drug abuse as essentially "health" issues. (Dalrymple, 2007)

This paper explores how these factors and other social determinants have influenced the uptake and increased consumption of illicit drugs by the general population in developed countries and gives due consideration to the substantial and ever increasing social, economic and health costs to societies world-wide. (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008;

National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2013; Stutman, 2013; W.H.O. Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008) International policy development and national attempts to implement effective illicit drug related policies are discussed in light of data which has been collated through national and international studies. (W.H.O. 2013).

The authors posit that there is a need to address underlying issues and principles relating to personal responsibility; and at a national level, a need to present a unified approach across government departments in preventing harm from illicit drugs, which have in the past been seen as adopting a narrow “silo” approach (Carey & Crammond, 2014). It is proposed that much can be achieved through implementing an effective model for addressing social determinants which impact on communities and contribute to the increasing incidence of drug and alcohol abuse and associated negative impacts being reported in developed countries. (UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2016)

Only clear and unambiguous policy frameworks, along with policy implementation which ensures Demand Reduction and Prevention – along with effective drug exiting Recovery Programs – will see the health, community and familial outcomes that societies focused on reducing drug use can achieve.

To view the full paper, please [click here](#).

About the Authors

Shane W. Varcoe

Shane Varcoe is currently the National Partnerships & Training Officer for the Dalgarno Institute, a community-based, not-for-profit, public interest coalition of alcohol and drug educators in Australia, deploying Train the Trainer Drug Education model nationally.

Previously as Executive Director of the Dalgarno Institute, he designed, implemented and led numerous prevention programs and campaigns, such as the 'No Brainer' alcohol and other drug education project. As Director of Education Services for Concern Australia, he led the Values 4 Life schools program. He also has authored a number of papers, studies and books. He is a registered Chaplain with a Diploma of Ministry, A.C.R.A.C.S. (Advanced Certificate Residential & Community Services) qualifications, and has over 30 years of youth/community work, education and facilitation experience.

Derek Steenholdt, Master Educator, Emeritus

Derek currently serves in an unpaid staff role as a Research Officer for Dalgarno Institute in Australia. His qualifications are: MEdSt; Bed (Prim); BEd; BSc (Hons); Certificate III in Quality Management for Business Excellence, AQC, 2001; Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, ISIS RTO, 1999; Workplace Assessor, West Melbourne Institute of TAFE, 1998; Master of Educational Studies, Monash, 1991; Bachelor of Education (Primary), Deakin, 1993; Bachelor of Education, Monash, 1978; Bachelor of Science (Honours), Monash, 1971.

Conflict of Interest

I declare that I have no proprietary, financial, professional or other personal interest of any nature or kind in any product, service and/or company that could be construed as influencing the position presented in, or the review of, the manuscript entitled, *Social Determinants and Substance Use: A perspective beyond the policy 'silo' pragmatics*, except for the following: Shane Varcoe is the National Training & Partnerships Officer of the Dalgarno Institute and Derek Steenholdt is an unpaid Research Officer of the Dalgarno Institute.