# Alcohol involvement in suicide in rural and regional populations

## Researchers

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## Summary

This report details the work undertaken, findings and lessons learnt during a pilot investigation into impulsive (unplanned) suicide in rural and regional populations. The major outputs of the project were to be a review of the literature on the topic and the conducting of a pilot study to recruit 20 patients attending emergency departments (ED) for alcohol-related impulsive suicide. At the end of the project, only three patients were able to be recruited after 18 months of trialling different recruitment methods and engaging additional agencies to assist with data collection.

This research project, although failing to meet its goals, has provided some important lessons and suggests the topic of alcohol-related impulsive suicide is an issue worthy of further investigation.

## Outcomes

This study was proposed to be used to generate preliminary data for a proposed national study; funding for which was to be sought from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). This study aimed to:

* identify the level and type of alcohol and drug use involved in suicide attempts;
* examine the differences between rural and metropolitan suicide attempts in a number of key areas: mental health, self-esteem, level and type of alcohol use, level of alcohol dependency and time spent planning/contemplating suicide; and
* gain a more complex and deeper understanding of the role of alcohol, mental health, rurality and other relevant factors which might influence an individual to attempt suicide.

Only three patients were recruited after 18 months of trialing different recruitment methods and engaging additional agencies to assist with data collection. This was primarily because the clinicians who were needed for recruitment would not or could not recruit participants.

The three patients interviewed did support the hypothesis that some people report attempting suicide under the influence of alcohol, and show few depressive symptoms immediately following. This pointed to a contributively causal role of alcohol. All participants found the interview process helpful in understanding what had happened, despite it also being very emotionally challenging.

[view the report](/wp-content/uploads/2270-Alcohol-Involvement-in-Suicide-Final-Report.pdf)