# Evaluation of Oolong House Rehabilitation Program

## Researcher

Dr Daphne Hewson, Macquarie University

## Summary

This project evaluates the Oolong House Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation program in order to identify its strengths, weaknesses, and community stability, particularly for Indigenous stakeholders. The focus of the project was on staff experiences, client intake, and the music program.

The project undertook approximately 60 qualitative interviews with past and present clients, staff, and Indigenous groups, correctional centres, health professionals and other stakeholders.

## Outcomes

The project identified many positive aspects of the program leading to positive staff attitudes and successful outcomes for clients in a number of areas. The therapeutic program contextualises substance-misuse within the broader picture of the clients' lives and wellbeing. The main strength of residential settings is in creating a safe culture for clients to gain a new lease on life. The program also offered a safe place for clients, not only due to the drug-free environment but also because of the atmosphere of welcome and acceptance, offering cultural safety and a sense of integrity.

Further to this, clients were viewed with respect by participants and this attitude was identified as a strength of the program. Clients were encouraged to have a voice in the direction of the program and were viewed as part of the broader community. This attitude reflects the holistic approach of the program where the physical, mental, spiritual, cultural, and emotional experiences of clients are considered by staff in meeting the diverse and changing needs of different clients.

A significant factor in staff experiences of Oolong House was the team environment and relationships between staff and management. Management was seen as supportive of staff as individuals and as part of a team. This was reflected in a sense of personal and professional growth.

The physical environment of Oolong House was a source of pride for staff, clients, and the community since its extensive refurbishment during the restructure. Clients were actively involved in maintaining the property.

Participants all spoke with concern about the lack of resources within the program. This impacted on the desire for continued professional development and the delivery facets of the therapeutic program.

Similarly, staff burnout is an ongoing concern in AOD settings, and participants attested to the significant challenges of the role at personal and emotional levels. Support in the form of a flexible workload and being able to utilise the aspects of the therapeutic program for their own wellbeing were all experienced as supportive factors against burnout.

There are many rewarding ways in which staff gain satisfaction from their work. In this evaluation, staff reported the esteem of peers and management as important, as well as the opportunity to work directly with clients.

[view the report](https://www.fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-of-Oolong-House-rehab-program-2006.pdf)