# Specialised alcohol and drug treatment in Victoria: Using telephone services to determine prevalence of problematic alcohol use and treatment utilisation

## Researchers

1. Ms Susan Clemens, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre
2. Associate Professor Alison Ritter, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre

## Summary

This project aims to develop a reliable multiplier method to estimate the wider prevalence of problematic alcohol use based on the innovative use of an existing AOD information telephone counselling services with the addition of brief questions on treatment utilisation.

The group studied were callers to the DirectLine Drug and Alcohol Counselling and Referral Service between July and December 2004 who requested help for their own alcohol use.  Results from this study were compared with estimates from other studies and is in broad agreement in predicting between 34,900 and 47,000 individuals annually expecting to receive treatment through government-funded agencies in Victoria.

## Outcomes

Data collected from a telephone service can be used as a treatment multiplier to calculate the number of clients that require intensive treatment for alcohol use annually.

The potential for research data collection on hard-to-reach populations via a telephone counselling and referral service is feasible. Special consideration due to the unique service delivery type should be given, especially in areas such as training for data collection, caller recruitment and the diverse range of caller presentations.

The correct citation for this report is: Clemens, SL & Ritter, A 2009 Estimating the prevalence of individuals likely to use publicly funded alcohol treatment services: an indirect estimation technique. Drug and Alcohol Review, 27(5): 504-508.