



**SMART**  
Recovery

Life beyond addiction

**IMPACT IN  
ACTION**  
2023

## About SMART Recovery Australia

SMART Recovery Australia offers practical and solution focused mutual aid meetings, designed to provide participants with a toolbox of coping strategies and skills they can use to achieve enduring change.

In partnership with over 50 member organisations, the SMART Recovery Australia team successfully facilitated over 225 groups for 115,000 people living with addictive behaviours, working hand in hand helping them through their recovery journey to achieve a life free from addiction.

## Defining Addiction

Addiction is a learned behaviour rather than a moral failing or a disease. Addiction includes alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex/porn, food, shopping, gaming. It is a maladaptive coping mechanism that individuals develop to manage their thoughts, emotions, or life situations. With support, people can learn to self-manage and take control of their behaviour of concern.

# Addiction Impacts on Wellbeing

## THE STATISTICS IN AUSTRALIA

The numbers are hard to hear but we need to listen.



**1 IN 4**

Australians will struggle with alcohol, drugs, or gambling in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>



**1 IN 20**

Australians has an addiction or substance use disorder<sup>2</sup>



**1 AUSTRALIAN DIES**

every 60 minutes from alcohol, drug or gambling related harm



**1 IN 4**

Australians living with addiction will lose their lives to suicide<sup>3</sup>



**A LARGE PROPORTION**

of criminal offenders have a history of substance dependency<sup>4</sup>



**18 YEARS**

is the average time delay for seeking help for addiction due to stigma<sup>5</sup>



**OVER 500,000**

Australians are unable to access help for their addictions<sup>6</sup>



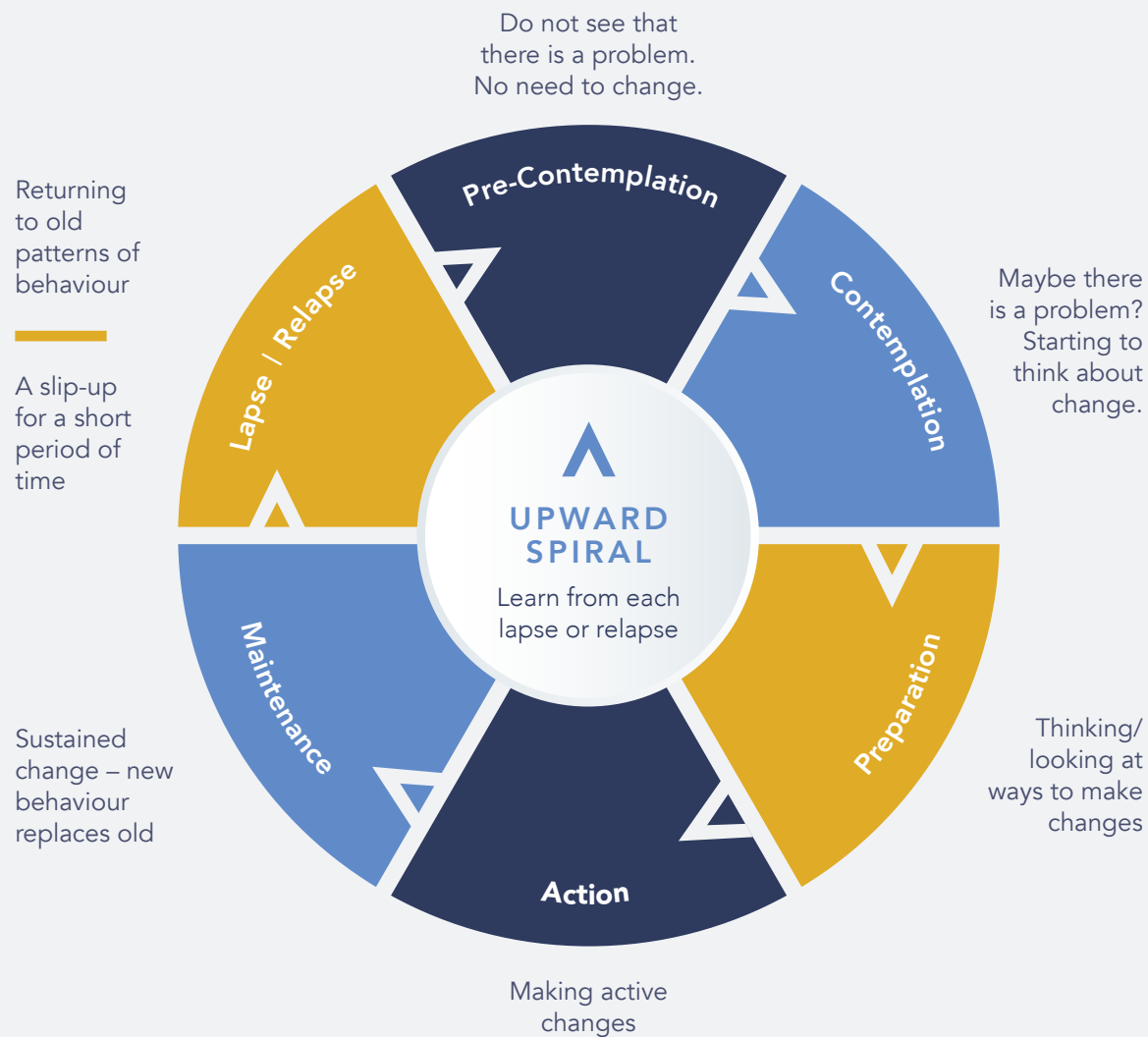
**\$270 BILLION**

is the annual cost of lost productivity for mental illness and substance use impacts combined in Australia<sup>7</sup>



# The Addiction Cycle

## STAGE OF CHANGE



The harm minimisation spared my life and health until I could make the decision for abstinence.

JEN

## The SMART Recovery Australia Way

### LIFE BEYOND ADDICTION

**SMART Recovery Australia** is the first and only national provider of professional and peer-led, evidence-based, and self-empowering addiction recovery support in Australia that is not based on a belief in a higher power or requiring individuals to admit powerlessness over their addiction.

Working with compassion not judgement, our lived experience facilitators use tools and techniques to help participants to set their own goals which may or may not include abstinence.

Our free services and peer support recovery groups are inclusive and accessible to everyone regardless of location throughout Australia.



OUR 4-POINT PROGRAM  
POINT OF DIFFERENCE

I like that I don't have to call myself an addict. It is problem solving and setting your own goals.

**NOAH**

# Referral Pathway

## PARTNERS IN RECOVERY

### ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN

- > Alcohol
- > Drugs
- > Gambling
- > Sex/porn
- > Food
- > Shopping
- > Gaming



### REFERRAL AGENCIES

- > General practitioners
- > Family & friends
- > Self-referral
- > Referral partner
- > Legal system



### MEETINGS & RESOURCES

- > Face-to-face meetings
- > Online meetings
- > 7-day plan
- > Check in with facilitators
- > Recovery manuals
- > Free online tools
- > Certificate of attendance provided to courts for offenders and their families

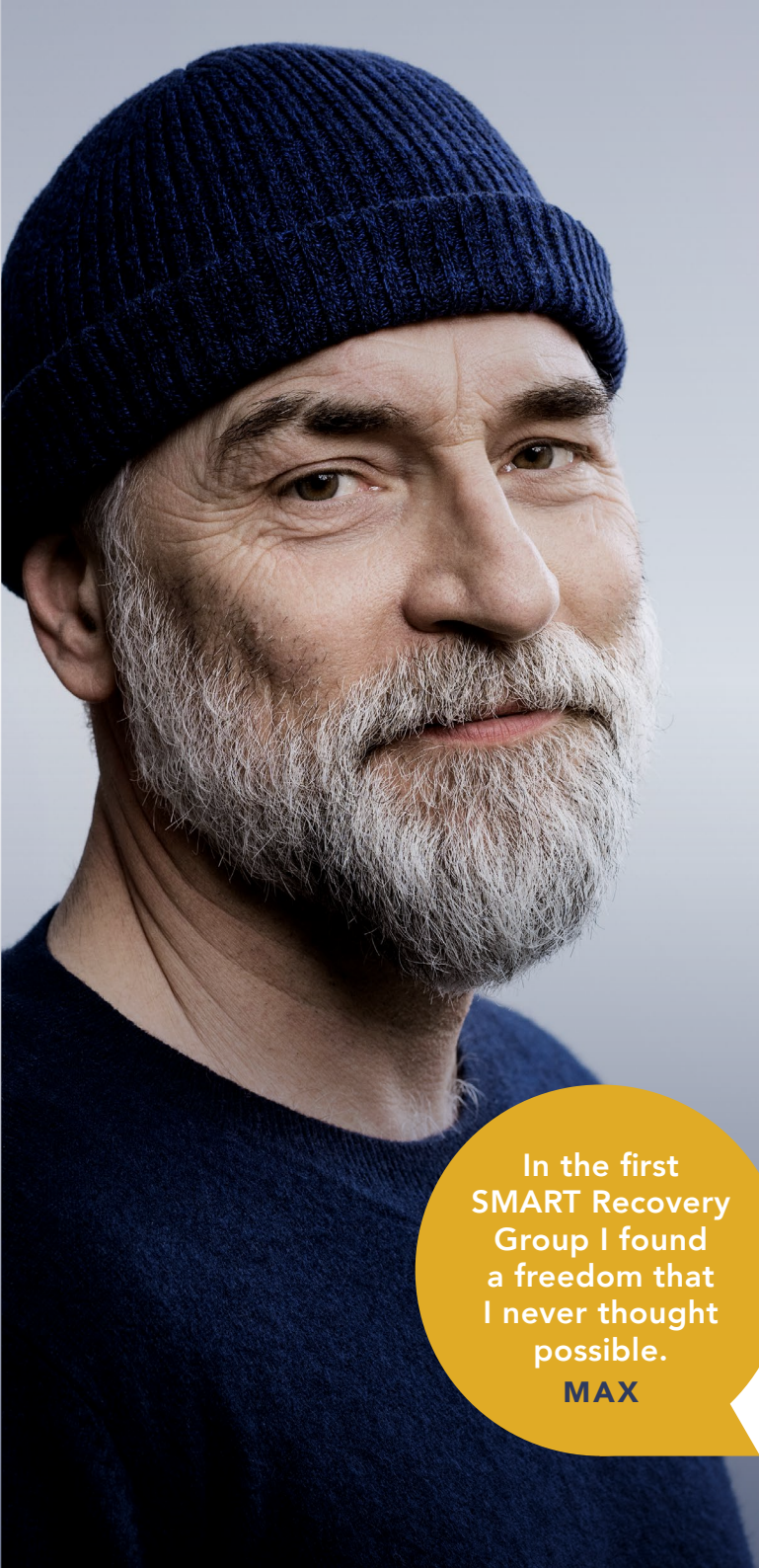


### GRADUATION – SELF-MANAGED RECOVERY

- > Lived experience facilitator training pathway
- > Facilitator portal
- > Peer-to-peer online training module
- > Trained facilitators support others through addiction recovery







In the first SMART Recovery Group I found a freedom that I never thought possible.  
**MAX**

## SMART Recovery Australia's Service Delivery During 2023

### OUR PROGRAMS

#### Diversity & Inclusion

The complexity of addiction means that no case is the same. Safe from judgement, stigma and with no religious basis, SMART Recovery Australia provides an inclusive, non-triggering forum accepting people for who they are.

Our lived experience facilitators have diverse backgrounds, including; gender and sexuality, culture, peers and health professionals, meeting our participants where they are at.



*I like talking to people from my community and not feeling judged.*

SARAH

#### SMART Family and Friends

SMART Family and Friends Program focuses on improving the quality of life and coping skills and support system for those affected by a loved one's addictive behaviour.

Our online and in-person groups led by lived experience facilitators provide strategies for family and friends to stay safe, seek support, problem solve and set goals. We provide resources including a manual for people affected by the behaviour of someone close to them.



*The focus is on the family and friends of people with behaviour of concern and teaching practical skills to improve their own resilience and wellbeing.*

JOSETTE FREEMAN,  
SMART AMBASSADOR

#### SMART Practice Spotlight: Online Meetings and COVID-19

As a response to the pandemic, 174 online groups were hosted, working with 47 SMART member organisations (community services, health, mental health and AOD, alcohol and other drug), and 90 SMART facilitators to keep delivering our vital services during the lockdowns.

# SMART Justice Program

## INSIDE OUT

**SMART Inside Out Program** is our flagship program supporting people who are in custody, on remand, sentenced and pre-release.

Inside Out helps participants overcome learnt behaviours that lead to criminalisation, through our recovery tools and techniques. This enables participants to change their thoughts, feelings and behaviours to break the cycle of offending. They are taught problem solving skills for dealing with the stresses of everyday life.

This program aims to reduce re-offending, treats alcohol and drug use, and motivates offenders to participate in ongoing maintenance meetings in the community.



**8-13% REDUCTION**  
in re-offending and conviction for 2,343 offenders over 4 years



**13% REDUCTION**  
in violent reconviction rates



**21-42% REDUCTION**  
in general and violent crime for offenders attending both Inside Out and SMART Recovery Programs



**19% REDUCTION**  
in reconviction rates for attendees of Inside Out and SMART Recovery Programs combined



**10 SMART**  
program sessions attributed to a significant therapeutic effect

The impact of being isolated in a place where you are not valued is demoralising and dehumanising. The colour, cultural and language barriers create a place where to be heard is to be craved. The SMART Recovery community assists by being willing to hear those who are rarely listened to. This is the place where rehabilitation becomes reality.

**PERSON IN CUSTODY**





## SMART Veterans and First Responders

Veterans and first responders can sometimes experience addictive behaviours and mental health issues, related to their service. Traumatic experiences can overwhelm coping skills and affect every area of personal life.

SMART Veterans and First Responders Program collaborates with veterans and first responders and their families to work through the powerful anxieties which can lead to unhealthy coping behaviours including self-medication with alcohol or drugs, or engaging in risky behaviours which can compound problems.

*It's flexible and understanding. It's not based on guilt. Goals are about promoting a life worth living rather than focusing on the problematic behaviour.*

PETER

## SMART Youth and Teens

SMART Youth and Teens Program is targeted at supporting youth through their transition to adulthood. The program aims to address problematic behaviour through applying SMART principles and helps build self-esteem and encourages participants to take responsibility, make decisions and come up with their own solutions. It helps build consequential thinking skills and support networks.

*Young people often leave saying they learned valuable ways to cut down or stop their problematic behaviours. Participants frequently comment that talking with others of a similar age helps them feel like they are not alone with the challenges they are facing.*

MIDJUBIRI YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE AND NEWTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

## SMART LGBTQI+ Supporting Gender and Sexual Diversity

SMART LGBTQI+ Program has a range of facilitators from diverse genders and sexualities trained at creating a truly inclusive experience for the community. Groups provide a private and safe space in which to foster a healthy relationship with drugs and alcohol which align with personal life goals and sense of wellbeing. This can mean moderation, taking a break or ending the relationship with substances altogether.

*I'm really feeling the queer love and it's a safe space*

LAYLA



## SMART First Nations

**SMART Recovery Australia** is committed to meet the needs and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our Aboriginal Action Group look forward to launching our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program.

*There can be a shamefulness of addressing situations... this meeting has been made more blackfella friendly and more open.*

BRAD

## Our Impact in 2023

### THE NUMBERS

51

Online **SMART**  
Groups



225

**SMART** Groups  
nationally



11,700

Individual  
meetings



500

**SMART** Facilitators  
trained nationwide



50

Member organisations  
(community service, mental  
health, health and AOD)



2,000

Certificates of  
attendance for criminal  
justice proceedings

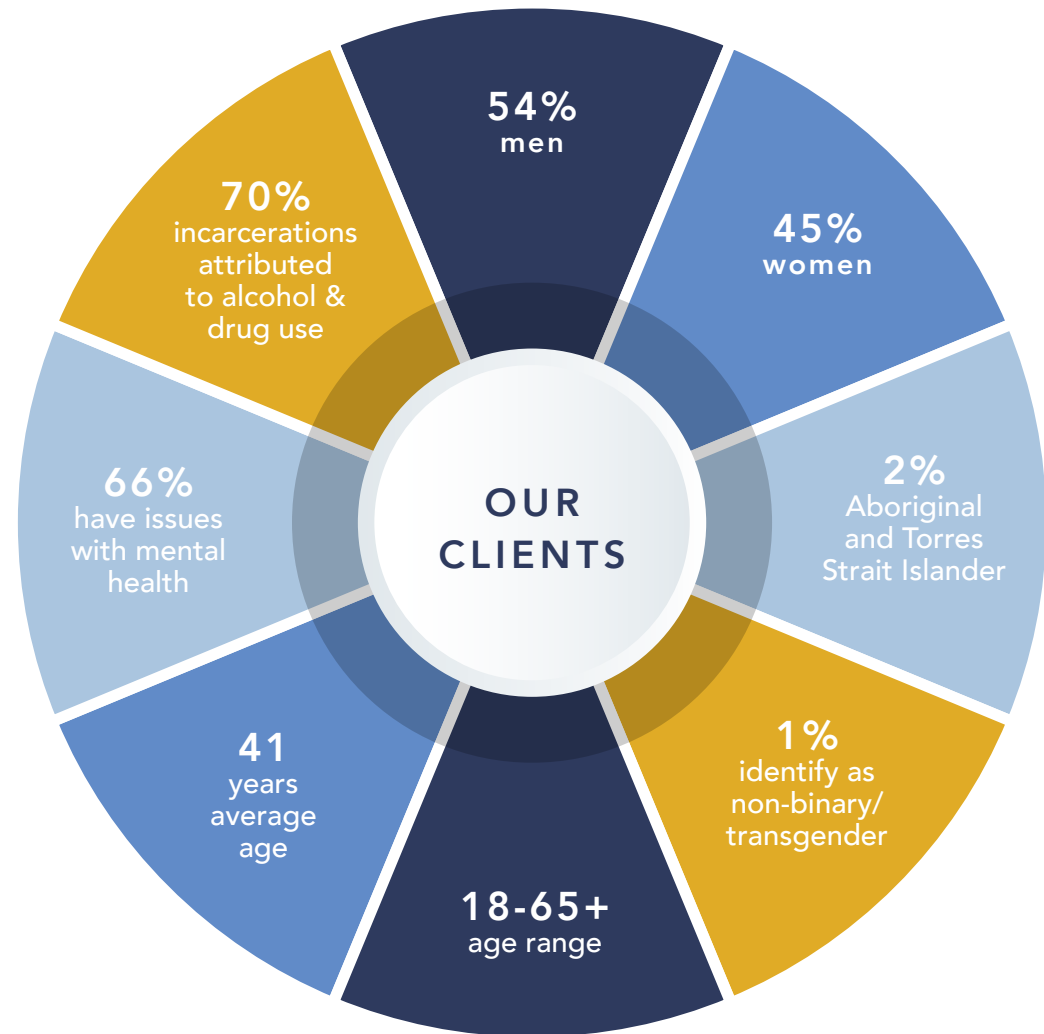


3,360

Volunteer hours  
provided by 30  
volunteers



## The People We Work With

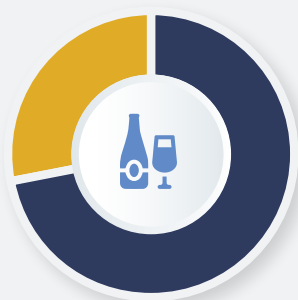


By identifying the unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, I was able to change the behaviours that followed.

**MARK**



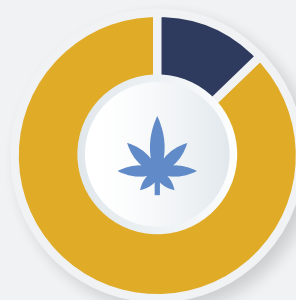
## Addictions We Work With



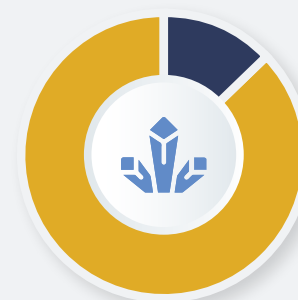
ALCOHOL  
72%



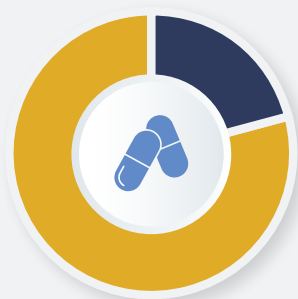
FOOD, INTERNET,  
SHOPPING  
21%



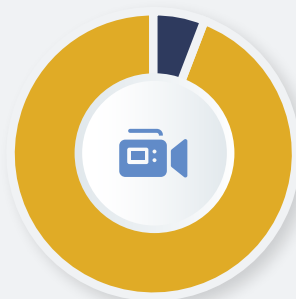
CANNABIS  
13%



METHAMPHETAMINE  
13%



OTHER DRUGS  
18%



SEX/PORN  
6%



GAMBLING  
6%

## Nick's Story



**After a decade of alcohol and cocaine addiction, my life hit the skids, hard. After pushing my mind, body and soul, and particularly my partner, to the brink, I lost everything I valued and went to hell and back. I was dying on the inside and it was crushing. I just couldn't function.**

I had ruined every good thing in my life up until that point through my addictions, and the last thing I had left that was worth anything, walked away. In hindsight, the only real shock was that she stuck around as long as she did. At the time, I was in shock. Through my own hand, I had created and entered my own personal hell. Loss and grief are enough on their own, but then you add in the crippling guilt for having caused it all, plus the burden of shame for feeling all of this in the first place.

My psychologist referred me to addiction recovery group SMART Recovery, and given my previous experience with traditional recovery programs I thought "Whoa, wait a minute...are you even listening? I need grief counselling, not drug and alcohol counselling. I'm done with all of that".

Through much trial-and-error, the patience of the group, and my persistence in coming back each week regardless of the outcome, I had found my triggers, my limits, and my favourite alternatives to 'partying'. Through the power of this group, I had developed effective plans and back-up plans, identified

and amplified my motivations, and found ways to respond to life rather than react to it. I had a system that worked for me. This is the key difference between 12-step programs and this.

SMART stands for 'Self-Management And Recovery Training'. Emphasis on 'self' – your goals, your tools, your measurement of success. It's yours to own. I set goals each week that I wanted to achieve, and I'm coming back most weeks now with a bigger and more successful story than the week before – not just around my intake, but around my whole life.

I still enjoy having a beer here and there, even a few beers, but I'm at the point where it appeals to me less and less. More importantly, I feel like the decision is now truly my own to make. I can safely have a drink without torturing myself about what it means, or where I might end up, or feeling like I've 'failed'.

Like those in the 12-step programs, I celebrate my success. Unlike them, I measure it not in the number of days since I've last touched a substance, but in the impact my behaviours are having on myself and those around me.

**Through the power of this group, I developed effective plans and found ways to respond to life rather than react to it.**



Visit our website to learn about our work

[smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au)