

**ODYSSEY
HOUSE**



*'A Calm in
the Sea of
Addiction'*

ODYSSEY HOUSE

MERIT PROGRAM

WAVERLEY COURT

**ATCA Conference -
'TC's Positive Journeys: Positive Outcomes'
October 2014
Presented by Michelle Tziarkas**

Odyssey House



Magistrates **E**arly **R**eferral **I**nto **T**reatment Court Diversion Program for Illicit Drug Users

- **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE MERIT PROGRAM.**
- **AFTER 9 YEARS IN OPERATION :**
- **WHO ARE THE CLIENTS OF Waverley MERIT PROGRAM?**
- **WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?**
- **THE FUTURE**

- **DRUG CRIME Diversion Program**

MERIT is a program available in most Local Courts in New South Wales that provides the opportunity for adult defendants with substance abuse problems to work, on a voluntary basis, towards rehabilitation as part of the bail process.

- **Funded by the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative**

- **FIRST COMMENCED OPERATIONS – 2000**

- **MERIT – 65 LOCAL COURTS ACROSS NSW**

- **JOINT INITIATIVE:**

- NSW ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT – LEAD AGENCY
- NSW POLICE
- NSW HEALTH

- **2006** - Odyssey House was the first NGO to successfully tender for the sole responsibility of operating and delivering a MERIT Program for a metropolitan area Local Court.
- **2014** - Three regional area courts are now operated by an NGO. Musswellbrook, Singleton and Coffs Harbour – managed and delivered by the Upper Hunter Drug and Alcohol Service.
- **2014** – MERIT is primarily an illicit drug use program – however the program is slowly expanding and the following 9 MERIT programs that assess and accept clients who have alcohol dependency issues.

Bathurst, Broken Hill, Manly, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo,
Wellington, Wilcannia, Wollongong, Orange.

What is the MERIT Program?

- **INTENSIVE 12 WEEK TREATMENT PROGRAM**
- **To be eligible for the program, a defendant:**
 - Must be an adult
 - Must be eligible and suitable for release on bail
 - Must have a demonstrable illicit drug use problem
 - Must give informed consent to participate.
- **A Defendant will not be eligible for the program if he/she:**
 - Has current or outstanding offences involving sexual assault or serious violence
 - Is charged with wholly indictable offences
 - Is on other court-ordered treatment programs

**The Key Objective of the MERIT Program is:
TO ENGAGE THE CLIENT IN INTENSIVE TIME LIMITED TREATMENT.**

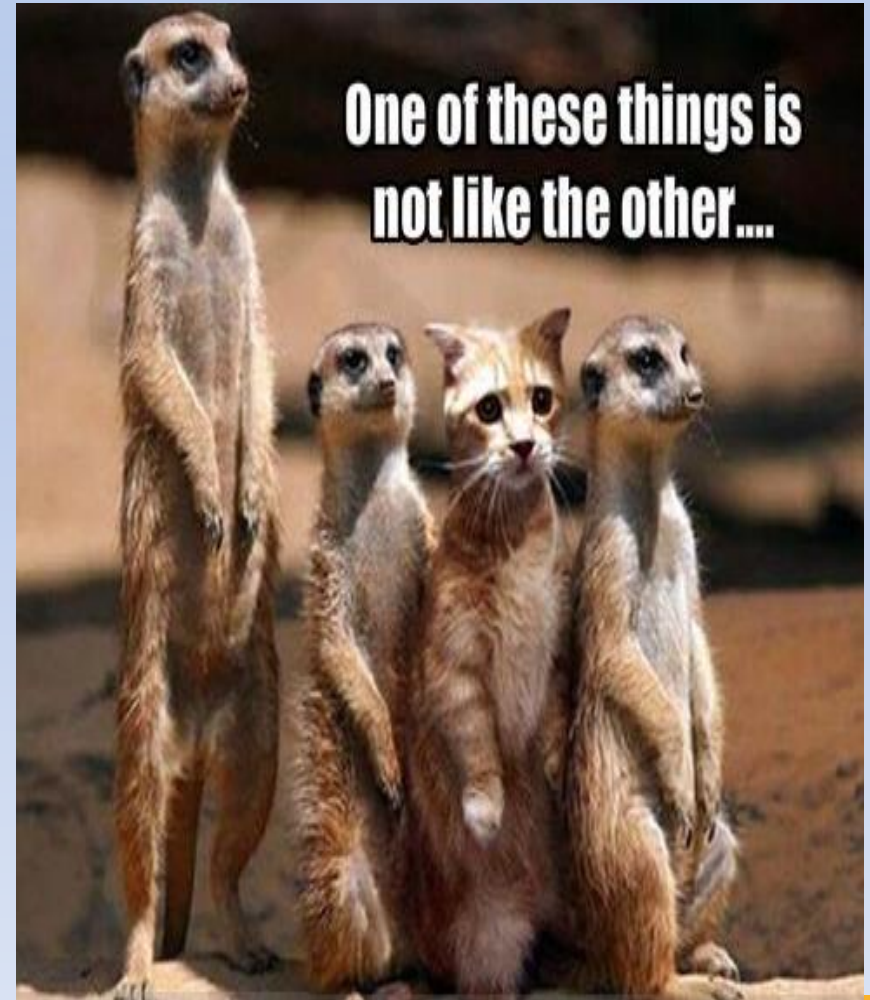
❖ CASE MANAGEMENT MODEL

- ❖ INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING
- ❖ GROUP COUNSELLING / EDUCATION
- ❖ WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT
- ❖ PHARMACOTHERAPIES
- ❖ ADMISSION TO RESIDENTIAL DETOXIFICATION /REHABILITATION PROGRAMS
- ❖ MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS
- ❖ MEDICAL HEALTH REFERRALS
- ❖ FAMILY SUPPORT
- ❖ LIVING SKILLS
- ❖ VOCATIONAL SUPPORT
- ❖ HOUSING SUPPORT



MERIT WAVERLEY COURT

- 8 years ago ????????????
 - How will Odyssey House, a TC, operate a MERIT PROGRAM?
 - Will they put every client into their program?
 - Will every client be expected to be abstinent at the end of the program?
 - Will this program be different from other MERIT Programs?














Waverley MERIT clients : 2013-2014

- **Males 77% Females 23%**
- **Non Indigenous 91% Indigenous 9%**
- **65% of clients completed the program. (Average of 119 days on the program)**
- **Clients accessed a range of detox programs and rehab facilities, depending upon their needs.**
- **Aboriginal Clients – may be referred to Aboriginal rehabs – such as Bennelong or Oolong House.**
- **Pharmacotherapy stabilisation – often an important part of case management.**

Proportion of clients on program using each drug at Entry.

DRUG	% USED	% USED – STATE	DIFFERENCE
ALCOHOL	62.3%	66.8%	4.5% 
AMPHETAMINES	36.2%	35.1%	1.1% 
CANNABIS	40.6%	65.7%	25.1% 
COCAINE	14.5%	6.6%	7.9% 
HEROIN	26.1%	12.4%	13.7% 
OPIATES	15.9%	11.6%	4.3% 
OTHER DRUG	7.2%	12.7%	5.5% 
TOBACCO	88.4%	88.0%	0.4% 
TRANQUILISERS	23.2%	15.5%	7.7% 



Implications for case management:

- **Higher opiate use** – pharmacotherapies – less able to access residential services within the 3mth timeframe.
- **Higher cocaine use** – these clients are often resistant to residential rehab services; often see themselves as ‘different’; and more likely to be employed.
- **Higher dependency on tranquilisers** – more difficult to complete a detoxification in 7 days. Can also be difficult to place in rehab. Or have been prescribed tranquilisers for mental health.

Community Based Approach

- Weekly counselling
- Attendance at 12 step meetings; or smart recovery groups.
- Mental health assessment and medication reviews.
- Urinalysis
- Assistance and referrals with housing, employment, Centrelink, medical needs, pregnancy support
- Domestic Violence counselling, support, referrals.

CASE MANAGEMENT GOALS

- ❖ Flexible harm minimisation strategies applied to all cases.
- ❖ Seek less drug use
- ❖ Improved stability in health /mental health
- ❖ Improved psycho social supports.
- ❖ Reduction in involvement in criminal activities.

CLIENT OUTCOMES

❖ CASE NO 1: Joe

- ❖ **Reduced drug use – abstinent from amphetamines, still smoking some cannabis. (confirmed by urinalysis)**
- ❖ **Mental health stabilised, new medication regime, and greater medication compliance.**
- ❖ **Housing – no longer homeless – has moved into a hostel.**
- ❖ **Has not reoffended in 3mths.**



❖ CASE NO 2: Mary

- ❖ **Attended Detox and 8 week rehab program.**
- ❖ **Abstinent from drug use. (Confirmed by urinalysis.)**
- ❖ **Has moved back in with family – who are positive supports.**
- ❖ **Is enrolling in TAFE.**
- ❖ **Attending Smart Recovery Groups**

And in conclusion.....

- MERIT Program – NGO Management
 - Program standards and operations
 - Client experiences
 - Staff relationship with the court
- The MERIT Program – was relatively easy to set up and continued operations have been without problems.
 - Support in early stages
 - Active and supportive members of Steering Committee
 - A very supportive Magistrate.

What will the future bring?



Odyssey House

