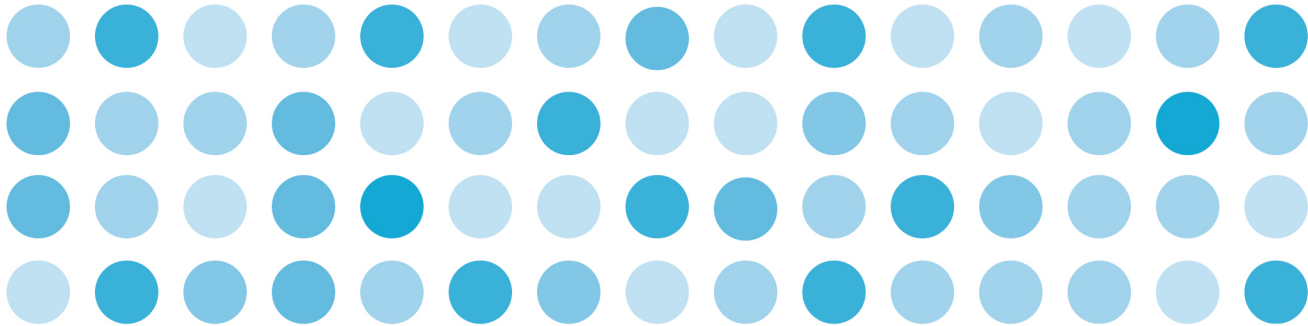


25-26 October 2010
Melbourne Cricket Ground



Anex 2010
**AUSTRALIAN
DRUGS
CONFERENCE**
Public Health and Harm Reduction

Kathryn Daley



Principal Sponsor



Sponsor



Problematic youth drug use:

It's not
about the
drugs



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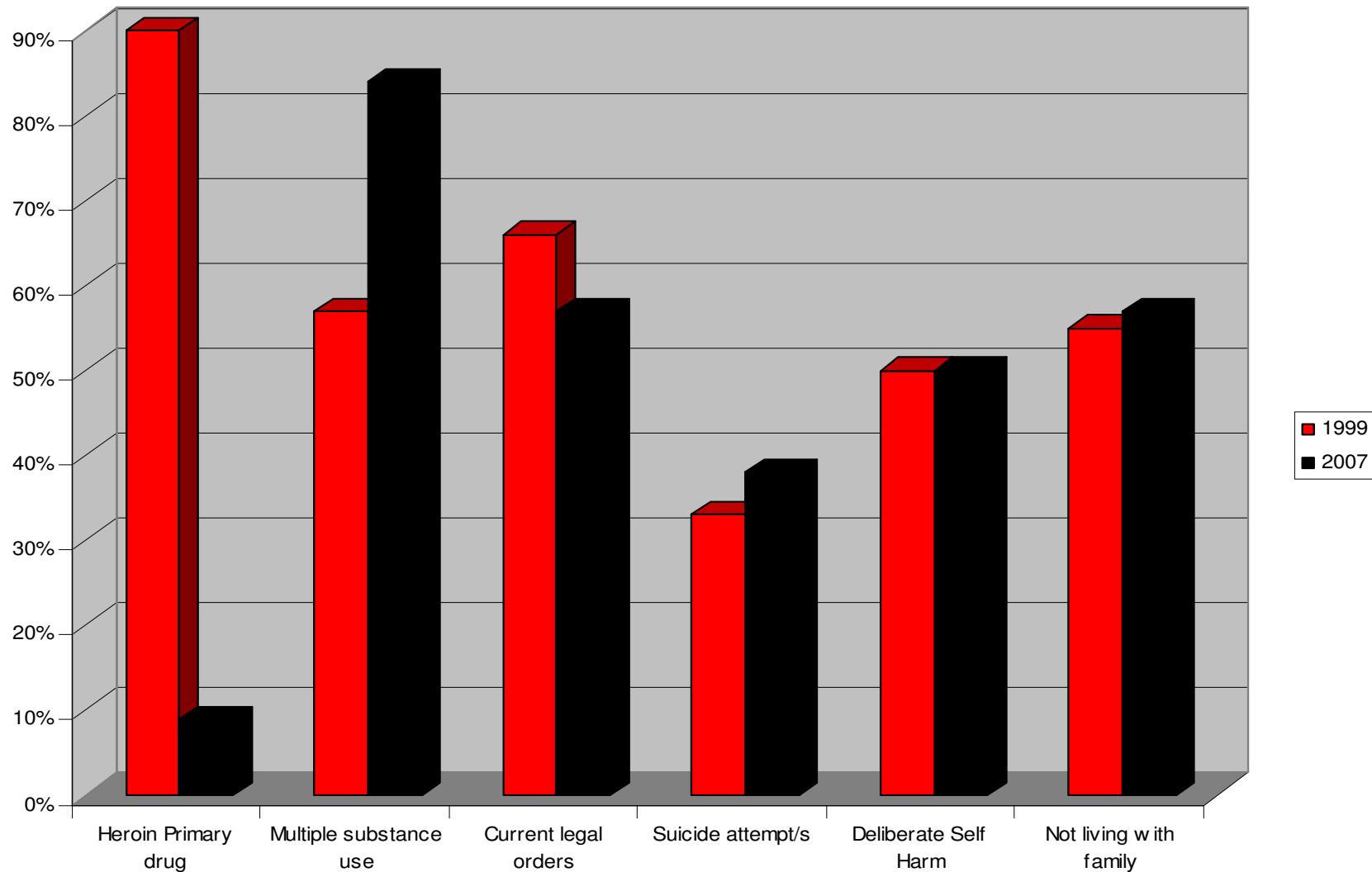
Presentation outline

- Project overview
- Demographics of clients
- How can we intervene earlier?
- Policy paradigms
- Understanding the issue
- Conclusion

Who are these young people?

- 400 active clients
- Gender: 68% of all clients are male
55% of voluntary clients are male
- COATS: 39% of clients
35% of non-COATS clients began as COATS
- 89% disengaged from school; 92% without year 12
- Homeless: 59% ever; of who, more than half still are
- Child protection involvement for at least 42%
- 35% of withdrawal clients had previously attempted suicide

Client needs: 1999 & 2007



Why do people use drugs?

- Depressants vs. stimulants
- Problematic use: pharmacological properties of the drug; or the purpose the drug is serving?
- Drug use does not cause problematic use
- But what does?



What it means

“When she (Mum) wasn’t able to look after me ... I stayed in places (foster homes) for a bit ... That was fucked - I hated it. I used to know when they (Child Protection) were coming and I used to run off ... It was fucked. I had to leave my mum. It was one of the worst feelings ever. Just thinking about it, it’s fucked mate; just living with another family that I don’t even know ... I used to sit there and just cry for my mum”

- Jared, 21 year old male

Early (gendered) themes

Sexual assault

'I just wish that there had been someone to listen', Voni

'I saw a counsellor at CASA once, but I talked too much and went home and regretted saying that much, so I never went back', Stacey

Self-injury

'It was the only thing that stopped the pain', Katte

'It was the only way I knew that I was alive', Ebony

Early (gendered) themes

School

'I just don't know why the teacher didn't ask', Voni

Family and homelessness

Lisa: I was kicked out when I was 13

Kat: How did things break down with your mum? Did you fight a lot?

Lisa: No, um, well - Mum got sick of having a daughter.

What about the boys?

- Clear disadvantages, but no clear patterns yet
- Systems & institutions feature prominently - Child Protection, Schools, Youth Justice
- Different type of narrative - structure / agency

Follow up interviews

Chloe

Housing stable

Finished year 11

Peer support work

Jared

Incarcerated for past ten months:

'In a way it was good, I got to catch up with all the guys I grew up with'

Policy frameworks



- Vulnerable Youth Framework
- Positive Pathways
- Siloed funding models for holistic interventions?

Downstream, Upstream?

- Confounding position:

AOD services are those most aware that problematic drug use is not about the drugs.

AOD services are those who lose their funding should they argue that the problem is not the drugs

- How can we work on prevention?

Understanding problematic use

- Understanding problematic substance use as just that - a substance use problem - encourages the myth that drug use is the issue
- Everybody has trauma; but not everybody has nobody
- Downstream services are essential; but we also need upstream interventions
- How can we negotiate this within the current political paradigm?

Conclusion

- No single causal factor, but several key issues, none of which are drug use as precipitating factor
- Limited in ways of changing this
- An explanation, but now what to do?