

## MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 19 August 2025

IPC Health acknowledges the recent Coroner's Court report highlighting the continued impact of heroin-related deaths in Wyndham and surrounding areas. While the number of deaths has not increased in the past 12 months, this is no reason for complacency.

### Reducing Heroin Overdoses in Wyndham

Reducing heroin overdoses requires a trauma-informed, community-based approach. IPC Health is actively working to reduce harm and support recovery through a range of integrated services:

- Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) at our St Albans campus provides clean equipment, safe disposal, and access to Naloxone, a life-saving medication that can reverse heroin overdoses.
- Free, confidential AOD counselling, tailored to individual goals and needs, is available to anyone seeking support.
- Education and outreach programs promote safer use practices and pathways to recovery.
- In FY24–25, IPC Health's AOD team supported 536 clients across referrals, intake, assessment, counselling, and care recovery, across our six campuses.

We also advocate for systemic reforms, including improved access to housing, mental health services, and culturally safe care. As Jayne Nelson, IPC Health's CEO, notes:

*"Reducing AOD dependence requires a holistic, integrated, community-based response. Every person's circumstances are different and often complex, so there's no 'one size fits all' solution."*

### Why 'no increase' is not enough

While Wyndham recorded seven heroin-related deaths in both 2022 and 2023, this stability should not be mistaken for progress. One death is one too many. There are several reasons why continued vigilance is essential:

- Changing drug landscape: The rise of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and nitazenes—up to 1000 times stronger than heroin—has made the drug supply more unpredictable and dangerous. These substances are harder to reverse with naloxone and increase the risk of fatal overdose (Griffith University, 2024).
- Hidden harms: Nonfatal overdoses are widespread and often underreported. They carry long-term health impacts and signal ongoing community vulnerability (Penington Institute, 2024).
- Critical intervention window: Research from NSW shows that the highest risk of fatal overdose occurs in the first month after leaving opioid agonist treatment, underscoring the need for continuity of care (OATS Study, 2023).

### Urgent Need for Timely Access to Treatment

IPC Health is calling for additional funding for on-campus and in-community care to reduce wait times for counselling, detox, and rehabilitation. Additionally, IPC Health encourages additional funding for beds in rehabilitation facilities. Some residential rehabs currently have waitlists of up to nine months—a delay that can cost lives.

Jayne Nelson notes: “When someone is ready to seek help, we need to be able to respond. That moment of readiness is precious, and it can pass quickly. Our AOD teams are doing incredible work, and we need more resources to meet demand. Additional funding is essential to ensure timely access to care and prevent avoidable deaths.”

### Client Story: Angie

Angie is a single mother and survivor of domestic violence who has shown extraordinary resilience. After engaging with IPC Health’s AOD services, she achieved over two years of abstinence, during which she gained qualifications in heavy machinery operation and built a career in construction. Following a relapse, Angie returned to IPC Health and is once again on track. Her story is a powerful reminder of the importance of timely, compassionate support.

Angie is available for interview via the IPC Health Communications and Marketing team.

If you or someone you know is struggling with alcohol or other drugs, please reach out. IPC Health offers free, confidential support. Call 1300 472 432 during business hours or visit [www.ipchealth.com.au](http://www.ipchealth.com.au).

For 24/7 support and referrals call DirectLine on 1800 888 236 or visit [www.directline.org.au](http://www.directline.org.au)

### References

Griffith University. (2024). Australia’s drug supply increasingly contaminated by synthetic opioids. Griffith News. <https://news.griffith.edu.au/>

Penington Institute. (2024). Australia’s Annual Overdose Report 2024. <https://www.penington.org.au/>

OATS Study. (2023). Opioid Agonist Treatment Safety Study. NSW Health.

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