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PUTTING CARE WITHIN REACH

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The Barwon Association for Youth Support and Accommodation (BAYSA) program began as the result of a significant drop in treatment access occurring in 2001–2003, when the number of young people participating in youth residential withdrawal was as low as two in south-west regional Victoria.

BAYSA, with the support of the Barwon South West Youth Alliance, was granted \$250 000 over two years by the AER Foundation, with the first team of regional youth AOD outreach workers starting work in September 2004. Within only six months of operation, the three youth outreach workers had engaged with up to 315 young people, resulting in 140 episodes of care, and access into withdrawal services increased to 18 admissions.

BAYSA established outpost and service protocols with regional services like Glenelg Southern Grampians Drug Treatment Services, and the co-location of youth outreach workers with Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre – a base for outreach operations from Warrnambool. During 2004–06, outreach workers travelled up to 3000 kilometres each week – one in every seven episodes of care being for Indigenous youth – and provided treatment to 247 young people. Around 480 young people in total were engaged through outreach functions,

which is a huge measure of the success of the program.

An external evaluation in September 2005 indicated that the following service types were accessed through outreach:

- 17% – youth residential withdrawal
- 47% – AOD counselling
- 15% – drug education
- 9% – drug diversion
- 7% – mental health
- 4% – supported accommodation
- 1% – home-based withdrawal.

The evaluation identified that 15–19 year olds were the largest group engaged in the program and the primary drugs of concern were alcohol (86%) and cannabis (83%) followed by tobacco and illicit substances.

A regional youth outreach model is to be released this year. Further information is available from BAYSA Drug Prevention and Treatment Services – dptp@baysa.org.au or telephone (03) 5244 7372.



Paul Weight, Josie Taylor and Tony Harrison from BAYSA receive their award

Photo courtesy of Encapture Photography