



## ***Media Statement***

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### **Alcohol and Drug Specialist Appointed at Fremantle Hospital**

Fremantle Hospital Emergency Department has appointed a Drug and Alcohol specialist to help in the management of patients with substance misuse and dependence problems.

Clinical Nurse Consultant Brenda Jones has worked on the front-line with patients who present at emergency departments with overdoses, psychosis and other medical symptoms.

She said the biggest problem, in her experience, is alcohol abuse which most patients do not consider as a drug.

“This is a huge concern and causes traumas, accidents, abuse, overdose and costs Australia in the region of \$7.5billion a year.

“Australians have a culture of drinking across all ages and of binge drinking, particularly in younger people.

“Drug-wise we see more and more young people presenting with serious drug-related problems and I hope that this position will address some of the issues that arise when these people come to hospital for treatment.

“My experience includes dealing with patients who over dose.

“My role includes talking to patients when they are stable about services and help on offer for substance addictions,” Brenda said.

Brenda continues to develop strong relationships with relevant local community support agencies.

“I get a pretty clear and up-to-date idea of what drugs are available on the streets and this information helps prepare staff with relevant information to assist the patients we could expect to see.

About thirty per cent of patients admitted to Fremantle Hospital through the emergency department or other areas have alcohol and/or drug related medical problems ranging from psychosis, overdose, confusion, and injuries from accidents.



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“It is imperative we manage these patients efficiently and quickly to maintain a safe environment for other patients and all staff at all times,” Brenda said.

“For most nursing and medical staff drug management in emergency departments is learnt on the job and my role is to support staff treating these patients.

“A lot of nurses have experience with managing withdrawals from drugs and alcohol.

“As a specialist I can support this knowledge by making informed predictions on potential outcomes and severity so staff can get one step ahead.

“Most patients are happy enough to talk to me when their medical crisis has abated.

“Sometimes they listen to the advice and information on the risks they are taking and the harm the substance or alcohol is doing to them.”

“We hope these strategies will also help reduce presentations to hospitals and lessen negative outcomes.”

Ends

**Ali Biddiscombe, Public Relations Officer 0404 890 057**