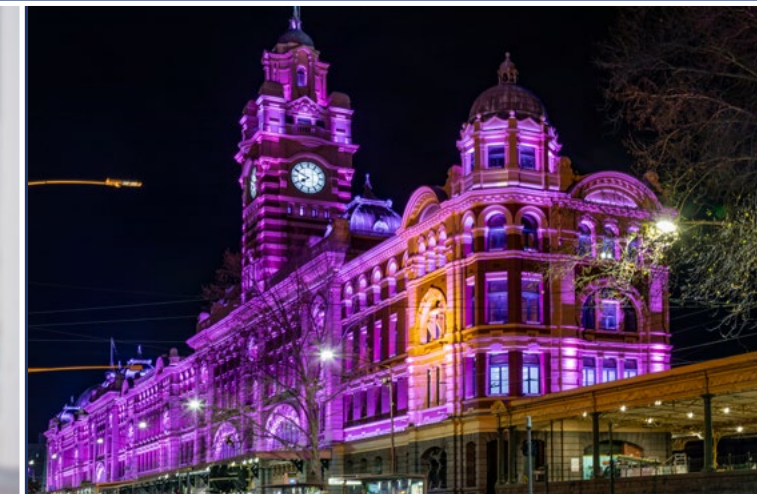




Penington | PENINGTON
INSTITUTE
Annual Review 2021



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About Penington Institute

Mission: To connect lived experience and research to improve community safety in relation to drugs, including pharmaceuticals and alcohol.

Our Vision: Communities are safe, healthy and empowered to manage substance use.

Front cover: A cross-section of our education
and awareness campaigns throughout 2021

Our Organisation

Our Patrons

Board of Directors

Ms Kathryn Greiner AO (Chair)

Ms Carmel Arthur

Professor Nicholas Lintzeris

Ms Lucinda Nolan PSM

Senator Vernon White

Adjunct Associate Professor
Scott Wilson

Dr Bulent Hass Dellal AO

Mr David Stewart

Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee

Ms Carmel Arthur (Chair)

Ms Shobhana Chetty BSc, MAcct

Mr Joe Flinn BAcc, CA

Mr Bruce Lanyon BBus, MBA,

FCA, SF Fin

Communications Advisory Group

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Ms Brooke Boger

Ms Lahra Carey

Ms Georgie Herbert

Mr Andrew North

Ms Laura Parr

Ms Meegan Sullivan

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal
AC CBE (Chief Patron)

Professor The Hon Dame Marie
Bashir AD CVO

Professor Suzanne Cory AC

Professor Peter Doherty AC

Professor Margaret Hamilton AO

Professor The Hon Barry Jones AC

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG

Emeritus Professor David de Kretser AC

Emeritus Professor David Penington AC

Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Message from the Chair



Kathryn Greiner AO
Chair

2021 was again a year of impressive achievement for Penington Institute – both publicly and behind the scenes – despite the ongoing disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Annual Review showcases the impact and profile of Penington Institute's work but I would like to take the opportunity to highlight briefly some of the progress we have made as an organisation.

Last year the Board and Executive identified a key area of potential growth: creating alliances with funding partners whose goals closely match our own. With this in mind, in September we welcomed David Stewart to our Board. David's long track record in business, philanthropy and finance makes him the ideal person to help us identify new opportunities for collaboration and funding.

Late 2021 also brought change to our Communications Advisory Group, with Chair Lucinda Nolan stepping down and Hass Dellal stepping up as her successor. I am confident that the Communications Advisory Group will continue enhancing the profile of our most important projects, such as *Australia's Annual Overdose Report* and International Overdose Awareness Day. I thank Lucinda for her significant contribution to the Board over many years, and we wish her well.

There is no doubt that engaging policymakers and the public on the issue of drug use and community wellbeing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic has not been easy. However, the hard work of everyone involved with Penington Institute means that the organisation continues to lead from the front in connecting lived experience and research to improve the health and wellbeing of our community. This Annual Review is testament to the positive change that Penington Institute creates.

I wish to thank our Patrons, Board, funding partners, staff, volunteers and advisory committee members for their dedicated contributions in what has been a challenging but rewarding 12 months.

Message from the CEO



John Ryan

Chief Executive Officer

The Annual Review provides everyone involved with Penington Institute with an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day and reflect on how much work we do and the impact we have.

Beyond the latest editions of flagship work such as *Australia's Annual Overdose Report*, International Overdose Awareness Day and our leading workforce development program, 2021 also heralded the return of *The Bulletin*. *The Bulletin* remains the only publication for the nation's Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) workers and I am grateful to the Australian Department of Health for its support.

The Annual Review also sheds light on the *Between Us* campaign, the many projects Penington Institute leads or supports to improve access to evidence-based information or life-saving naloxone, and our longstanding leadership when it comes to advocating for better drug policies.

As always, thanks go to the members of the Penington Institute Board for their dedication and insight. I would especially like to thank our Chair, Kathryn Greiner, for her support and steadfast advocacy of our organisation. Thanks are due also to our many volunteers, staff, collaborators and other stakeholders.

I look forward to 2022 being the year in which Penington Institute and our stakeholders can finally put the pandemic behind us. Here's hoping that a new, better 'normal' is right around the corner.

Increasing influence through targeted health research and promotion

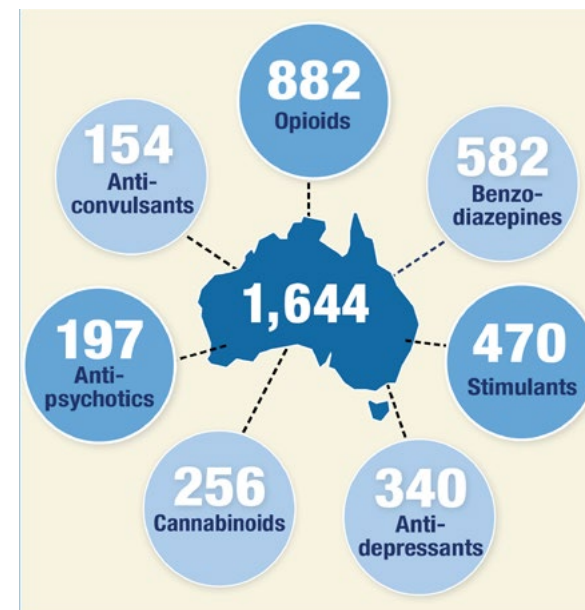


Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2021

Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2021, published on International Overdose Awareness Day (August 31st), revealed that for the sixth year running more than 2,000 Australians died of an overdose.

Legal drugs again took the greatest toll, with pharmaceutical opioids and benzodiazepines present in the majority of unintentional overdose deaths. In 2021 Penington Institute expanded *Australia's Annual Overdose Report* adding information on drug-induced suicides, more detailed analysis of poly-drug deaths, and additional analyses of overdose by geographic area and other demographic characteristics. We also published five-year overdose data for every ABS statistical area in Australia, providing detailed data to help people understand the toll of overdose in their local area.

In another first for Penington Institute, we worked closely with comedian and actor Jimeoin to create a memorable launch for the 2021 Report. Jimeoin gave us all a dose of reality by reading from "the report that can stop an overdose". Featured infographics and links to other educational Penington Institute resources are available on the *Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2021* landing page.



Downloads of *Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2021* far exceeded our targets, reinforcing its reputation as the most comprehensive source of information about overdose deaths in Australia.

[Read or download AAOR 2021](#)

Cannabis

The subject of cannabis law reform in Australia is attracting increasing attention. Community attitudes, informed by the experiences of overseas jurisdictions, are steadily moving in the direction of evidence-based cannabis policies, away from the “war on drugs” tradition.

In 2021 Penington Institute began work on a project to drive informed debate around cannabis in Australia. The first stage of the project involved developing our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry Into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria. To complement this work and ensure that information about cannabis is widely accessible to the general public, we created a cannabis reform page on our website that rebuts many of the key myths and misconceptions that underpin Australia’s failed policy of cannabis prohibition.

We have now begun the next stage of the national cannabis project: the development of a report that documents the current situation in every state and territory around Australia with regard to cannabis (including medicinal cannabis) and hemp.

Based on gathering published data and speaking with experts and consumers, the report will offer an objective, descriptive analysis of the ways in which the various forms of cannabis are managed in each jurisdiction, including the strengths and limitations of each approach.

The report will be completed and published in 2022.

Increasing influence through targeted health research and promotion

International Overdose Awareness Day

Last year marked 20 years since International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) was first observed in St Kilda. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to make it difficult to plan and stage physical events, more than 730 events and activities took place around the world in 2021, demonstrating the resilience of the campaign, its meaning for IOAD supporters and its scope for continued growth.

On or around August 31st, IOAD was observed through workshops, rallies, vigils, prayer services, training sessions, speeches, exhibitions, summits and negotiations, as just a few examples. Events took place in more than 20 national languages in at least 37 countries, including for the first time Qatar, Mauritius, Colombia, the Seychelles and Burundi.

Penington Institute supports campaign activities by creating digital resources for supporters to use in their events, raising the profile of IOAD through social and traditional media, and sharing evidence-based information about the incidence and impacts of overdose. We also work closely with in-country partners and always welcome proposals for collaboration.

Some of the more than 730 individual steps taken in 2021 include:

- **US** – President Joe Biden formally proclaiming August 31st national Overdose Awareness Day as part of Overdose Awareness Week
- **US** – Google posting about the campaign on its company blog, which included the experiences of two senior Google staff
- **Myanmar** – volunteers conducting community awareness-raising to correct misconceptions based on traditional myths and to promote the use of naloxone
- **Canada** – the Métis Nation of British Columbia becoming the first Indigenous nation in Canada to roll out an adaptation of the Lifeguard app, customised with culturally sensitive language to provide instant access to support services and resources
- **Ireland** – the Ana Liffey harm reduction service launching its VanaLiffey mobile outreach vehicle
- **Mexico** – gathering in Mexicali for a remembrance event featuring naloxone training, fentanyl detection testing, needle and syringe distribution, and peer support discussions
- **Scotland** – the Scottish Drugs Forum creating an overdose prevention toolkit as part of its nationwide Stop the Deaths campaign
- **Australia** – First Step in Melbourne hosting its fifth annual overdose prevention training session in which more than 100 people learned lifesaving techniques
- **Afghanistan** – community members in Kabul meeting to pay public tribute to friends and colleagues lost to overdose
- **Burundi** – celebrating progress away from condemning people who use drugs by raising awareness of overdose deaths at a public rally in Muyinga
- **Puerto Rico** – the University of Puerto Rico presenting a theatre workshop, ‘The Silent Pandemic’, and a documentary on opioids as a chronic health problem.



Analysis shows that, globally, IOAD 2021 was mentioned almost 7,000 times in news reports and appeared in 25,000 social media posts (peaking on August 31st with a potential audience of 170 million people).

We are currently redeveloping the IOAD website to make it easier for experienced campaign supporters as well as first-time participants to get involved and make change in their communities. The new website will be launched in the first half of 2022.

The Bulletin

With the support of the Australian Government Department of Health, Penington Institute relaunched *The Bulletin* in February 2021.

The Bulletin is the only publication in Australia dedicated to exploring the issues that matter to frontline NSP workers. It is vital that the national NSP workforce has a forum in which to share knowledge and experience, understand emerging issues that are relevant to this work, and learn what is happening in other states and territories.

The relaunched version of *The Bulletin* combines the same commitment to practical issues with a new look and format. *The Bulletin* is supported by an Editorial Advisory Committee which has representatives from each state and territory, and an Advisory Panel that includes frontline workers and people with lived experience.

Subscribe to *The Bulletin* alerts for each new issue



Q&A WITH SENATOR VERNON WHITE: 'ALMOST ANY SOLUTION'S BETTER THAN THE STATUS QUO' Page 13

Increasing influence through targeted health research and promotion

Between Us public education campaign

Penington Institute partnered with Harm Reduction Victoria (HRVic) and the Association of Participating Service Users (APSU) to create and roll out a campaign that highlighted the many intimate conversations that occur 'between' workers, peers, families and people who use drugs to deliver important health messages to drive positive action.

Between Us focused on five key topics for people who use drugs:

- Pharmacotherapy
- Overdose and naloxone
- Benzodiazepines
- Infection control
- Telehealth

Large street-art posters with striking imagery were displayed at multiple locations across Melbourne, and brochures, wallet cards, fitpack stickers and social media graphics helped the evidence-based messages reach people who use drugs and the wider public.

Campaign material can be found in and downloaded from the 'Resources' section of the Penington Institute website.



[Download the *Between Us* digital resources](#)

Reducing Harmful Drug Use Through Peer-led Networks (RHDUTPLN) trial

This Victorian Government-led trial aims to develop processes for placing harm reduction peer workers within services in order to apply their lived experience and ultimately reduce drug-related harms.

In 2021 Penington Institute completed an evaluation of the two-year trial. The report provides details about each participating organisation's programs before and after the RHDUTPLN trial, insights from peers, lessons learnt and a list of recommendations to inform future peer-led harm reduction models.

Naloxone on Release Pilot: Stage II

Following on from our review of the initial Department of Justice and Community Safety Naloxone on Release Pilot, Penington Institute undertook a rapid review of Stage II of the program, which was offered across all adult public prisons in Victoria.

Our workforce team delivered 12 online train-the-trainer workshops to custodial and clinical staff to enable them to provide overdose-prevention education to prisoners (including around the risk of overdose immediately following release) and to give prisoners the skills and confidence to identify and respond to an opioid overdose.

The Stage II rapid review will be completed in early 2022.



Increasing influence through targeted health research and promotion

COVID vaccine ambassadorship



As Victoria rolled out COVID-19 vaccines in the second half of 2021, Penington Institute was engaged by the Victorian Government to develop a range of resources to increase awareness of their benefits and promote them to people who use drugs.

These resources were inspired by the bold *Between Us* campaign branding and informed by the understanding that people who use drugs may struggle to trust mainstream health campaigns due to their personal experiences of stigma and discrimination.

By leveraging our existing relationships and using accessible, relatable language, Penington Institute, in collaboration with Harm Reduction Victoria, will continue to work with people who use/inject drugs to promote vaccine uptake within their communities for the benefit of their health and wellbeing.

Workforce development

Despite the ongoing disruption of COVID-19, Penington Institute continues to deliver comprehensive and evidence-based online training to people working with people who use drugs.

Naloxone Access Program

On the back of the success of the Naloxone Subsidy Initiative, which enabled participating NSPs to distribute free naloxone, 2021 saw Penington Institute further lead the way in this important program.

By continuing to deliver our COPE (Community Overdose Prevention Education) training, Penington Institute supported organisations to prepare their staff to supply naloxone to people at risk of overdose. This training was extended beyond NSPs in 2021 to workers in other community sectors who frequently engage with people at risk of overdose, including housing and mental health staff.

Naloxone saves lives and Penington Institute remains committed to training NSP staff to be confident when handling it and discussing it with clients.

In 2021 we delivered training to housing, justice and other frontline workers nationwide to enhance their knowledge and understanding of drug use and how they can contribute to reducing drug-related harms.

Sexual Health and Safety @ Music Festivals

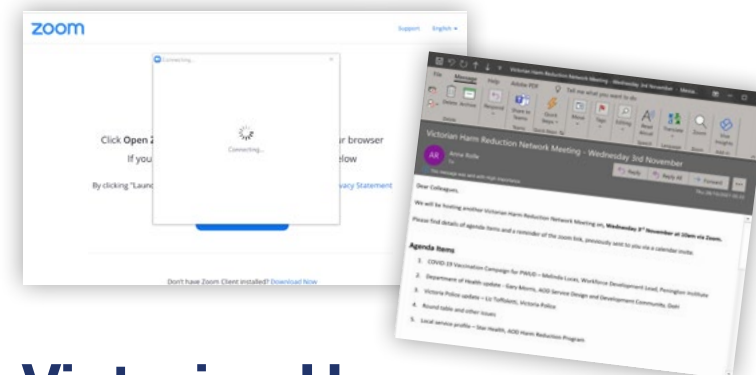
Penington Institute completed its *Sexual Health and Safety @ Festivals Toolkit* and prepared it for full-scale implementation.

The Toolkit supports festival organisers to incorporate sexual health and safety considerations when planning and running their events. The Toolkit is based on five pillars:

- **Commit** – Make a commitment to promoting health and safety at the festival
- **Engage** – Encourage patrons to think about and take steps to look after their sexual health and safety before, during and after attending the festival

- **Support** – Make it easy for patrons who have questions or concerns about their sexual health and safety to find appropriate help
- **Respond** – Establish and document clear processes and procedures for responding to incidents of sexual violence
- **Train** – Ensure all festival personnel share the commitment to sexual health and safety and know how to respond when any form of harm is witnessed or disclosed.

The Toolkit has been supported and championed by festival organisers and we look forward to seeing it in action when music festivals return to Australia.



Victorian Harm Reduction Network

Penington Institute has continued to hold fortnightly Victorian Harm Reduction Network meetings online, enabling the participation of services based in rural and regional Victoria.

These meetings are a forum for service providers, the Department of Health, Victoria Police and frontline staff to share updates, real-time challenges, and information and advice.

Throughout 2021 the Network provided the opportunity for researchers (including some based internationally) to share their insights and for frontline workers to share their issues. Most meetings are attended by about 50 people, underlining the desire of these professionals to stay connected with colleagues.



Increasing influence through targeted health research and promotion

Informing policy-making

Penington Institute continues to advocate for better approaches to drugs by making rigorous, evidence-based submissions to ongoing government inquiries.

Our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry Into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria highlighted the failures of the current prohibition approach. It noted the changes in public views on cannabis, as well as key policy shifts around the world that have seen more governments and communities recognising that criminalising cannabis does more harm than good. Based on the evidence of failure of the current approach, we argued for a strictly-regulated legal market for cannabis in Victoria.

Penington Institute also made a submission as part of the Australian Government Department of Health's consultation on the Post-market Review of Opiate Dependence Treatment Program Medicines. The review will examine the current arrangements to identify issues such as the future delivery of the program and barriers to treatment for people who have an opioid dependency. Our submission emphasised that the review should consider ease and equity of access to treatment, adhere to principles of person-centred care to empower patients to make informed decisions, and recognise that opioid dependence should be managed as a chronic health condition within primary health care settings.

Submissions such as these uphold our reputation for thought leadership and ensure that a practical, independent voice of reason is represented in the national conversation about drug-related issues.

[Read all our submissions](#)

Mansfield RESTART program

The Mansfield RESTART program is a community-led drug rehabilitation intervention designed to reduce drug use and its effects on individuals, their families and friends, and the broader community of Mansfield in North East Victoria.

The program evolved from our 2017 policy paper, *A community-controlled approach to problematic ice use*. It operates from Mansfield District Hospital and provides wraparound care from a broad range of services in the local community.

Penington Institute partnered with the University of Melbourne to evaluate the RESTART program, with the final report completed in May of 2021. The initiative was a success, providing a template for local action to reduce the harm from drugs including alcohol in regional and rural settings.

Penington Institute's Boards and Committees

Penington Institute is governed by its **Board** with the vital support of the **Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee** and the **Communications Advisory Group**.

Our work is further supported by the following advisory committees:

- Australia's Annual Overdose Report Advisory Committee
- Sexual Health + Safety @ Festivals Toolkit Advisory Committee
- National Cannabis Project Advisory Committee
- The Bulletin Editorial Advisory Committee
- The Bulletin Advisory Panel

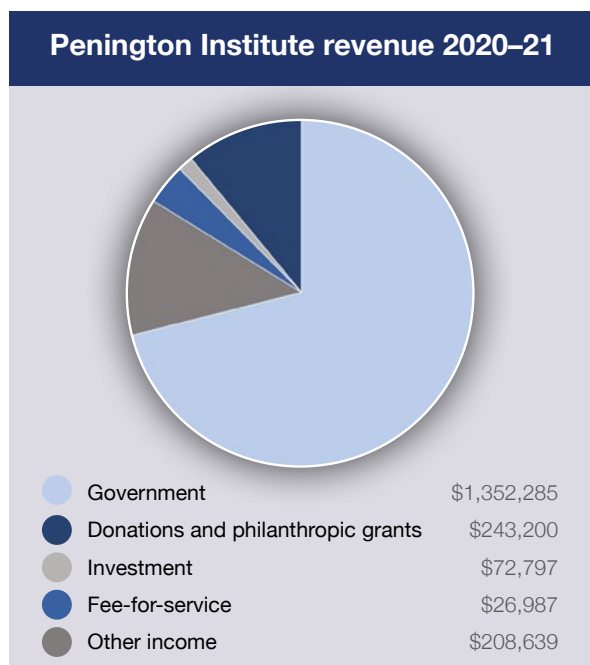
We are grateful for the support and guidance provided by each of our governance and advisory groups in 2021.

Finance

Penington Institute earned \$1.59 million in revenue from its programs, funders and donors in 2019/20.

Penington Institute has strong governance leadership through our Board, with the support of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Audit and accounting firm Crowe externally audits Penington Institute's annual financial statements.



Thank you to our funders and donors

Government

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Australian Department of Health

Trusts and foundations

Bell Charitable Fund

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Organisations

Alcohol and Drug Foundation

Camurus AB

Mansfield District Hospital

Merck Sharp & Dohme

Major donors

Kathryn Greiner AO

Professor David Penington AC

Through our community education, workforce development, training, research, policy work, and advocacy, Penington Institute improves community safety in relation to drugs.

Yet our flagship work, including International Overdose Awareness Day and *Australia's Annual Overdose Report*, is basically unfunded.

2022 is already unfolding as an important year, as many of the consequences of the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic play out in various ways, creating new challenges for us to meet.

If you can financially support Penington Institute, please consider making a donation. If you can volunteer your time and skills, please contact us.

DONATE NOW

Your contribution will help us do our important work.

www.penington.org.au

In October 2021 Penington Institute rolled out the *Between Us* community education campaign.

