



Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre

Media Release – New review looks at kava use and supply issues among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people

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The Australian Indigenous Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre (Knowledge Centre) has published a new [Review of kava use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#) with a particular focus on Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. The vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't use kava; kava use is restricted to a handful of communities in Arnhem Land in the NT. Previous research has demonstrated that the amount of kava consumed in these communities has tended to be at harmful levels. There is a lack of recent research about kava use in Arnhem Land; however kava use continues to be used and there is an active black market.

HealthInfoNet Director, Professor Neil Drew says "The latest review, written by Dr Julia Butt from the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University, includes detailed information on the many regulation changes relating to kava in Australia, including the impacts that regulation has had on communities. This timely review also incorporates the recent proposed changes to legislation in the NT. The Knowledge Centre has also produced some Knowledge Exchange tools for those who want the key facts and updates in a different format. These currently include a [factsheet](#) and a [video](#), with a plain language Summary to follow."

The purpose of this review is to provide a comprehensive synthesis of key information on the use of kava among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. The review provides general information about kava, including the health effects and the extent of kava use in Australia, and general information on the context of kava use including the historical, social and cultural contexts, and other social factors.

This review also discusses strategies to reduce harm related to kava use. Attempts to reduce the harms from kava have focused mostly on reducing its supply; there have been periods of regulation, it has been unregulated, licensed, illegal and under import restriction. Recommendations include the need for high quality research, action to prevent kava trafficking and resourcing for an increase in services to support people experiencing kava related harms. The experiences of Arnhem Land communities demonstrate clearly that collaborative community engagement is required to develop policy and also to implement, evaluate and adapt it.

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More information: The Knowledge Centre provides online access to a comprehensive collection of relevant, evidence-based, current and culturally appropriate alcohol and other drug (AOD) knowledge-support and decision-support materials and information that can be used in the prevention, identification and management of alcohol and other drug use in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities www.aodknowledgecentre.net.au