



United Way Glenelg

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **WHO BECOMES ADDICTED TO PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS?? ANYONE CAN!**

With the introduction of compulsory real time monitoring coming into force in Victoria later this year a local action group, led by United Way Glenelg with members from both local Rotary clubs, has been working on a number of initiatives to highlight and address the alarming rates of overdose deaths associated with prescription medication in the Glenelg Shire.

Executive Officer Nicole Carr said, "Data gathered for the years 2009-2015 indicates that the Glenelg Shire has the highest average annual rate of overdose death (13) in Western Victoria, with almost 80 percent of those overdose deaths involving pharmaceutical medications."

Following on from the successful community forum "Let's Talk", held earlier this year, the working group was encouraged to lobby government in advocating for the introduction of a real-time monitoring system at a national level as they could see the potential risk of cross-border prescription shopping if the monitoring system was rolled out in Victoria alone.

"The working group felt that as a border community a state based system which isn't integrated wouldn't be able to identify people travelling to get medication.

"We approached the Mayor and CEO of the Glenelg Shire Council and they have raised their voices and written to both state and federal government representatives in Victoria and South Australia asking for their support on this matter," said Ms Carr.

"We are extremely pleased with the support we've received thus far and hope our collective voice adds to those such as Scriptwise who are already advocating in this space."

The working group is now preparing printed literature aimed at early intervention education with the simple message "Who becomes addicted to prescription medications?? Anyone."

"Prescription medication dependence can happen to anyone. It is a common consequence of being prescribed potentially addictive medications, such as opioids (pain killers) and benzodiazepines (sleeping, depression and anxiety tablets)," said Ms Carr.

"Dependence is a health condition that does not discriminate. This means that it is possible for you, a family member, friend, neighbour or work colleague to become dependent on these medications without realising it. The body can develop a tolerance which lessens the medication's effectiveness and means more and more is needed to get the same relief.

"We know of examples of a footballer who has been injured on the field, a new mother who can't sleep and an older person waiting for hip surgery. All of these people have been prescribed medication yet find themselves still taking the medication months and in some cases years after the symptom has been relieved, concluded Ms Carr.

This week is the inaugural National Prevention of Prescription Medication Dependence Week. The week has been developed to raise awareness in local communities about potential harms associated with prescription medications such as opioids and benzodiazepines, promote existing prevention efforts across Australia and advocate for a government-funded national public awareness campaign.

United Way Glenelg is looking for local people who have experienced prescribed medication dependence to contact Nicole Carr on 0410513305 or [mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au](mailto:mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au) to share their story. This will be done in the strictest of confidence and your story can be anonymous.

For more information and how to seek help please go to [www.scriptwise.com.au](http://www.scriptwise.com.au)

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Media enquiries to Nicole Carr on 0410 513 305 or [mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au](mailto:mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au)