



Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program

Handbook



Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program: Handbook

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

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Developing the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) received \$7.9 million from the federal government to deliver alcohol and other drugs (AOD) education to general practitioners (GPs) nationally.

The RACGP will develop and deliver the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program, which aims to strengthen the capacity of GPs to address alcohol and other drug use in their communities. The program will be tailored to meet the needs of GPs in different communities and settings.

The program will include diverse modes of delivery, including face-to-face education, online learning modules and, for rural and remote GPs, a small group online education and mentoring series. The AOD GP Education Program will be developed with the aim that it:

- is relevant to GPs and their practices nationally
- encourages participation from rural and remote GPs
- can be contextualised to local circumstances and AOD treatment networks
- uses best practice across the wide range of health domains impacted by alcohol and drug use
- assists GPs to treat identified at-risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, veterans, people in the justice system, people who have experienced abuse and violence and trauma, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) individuals
- complements the high-quality education and resources currently available to GPs.

The RACGP drew upon the expertise of a wide range of GPs to develop the AOD GP Education Program, and established the AOD GP Education Program Reference Group, which consists of clinical representation from RACGP's Education Services and the following faculties:

- RACGP Specific Interests
- RACGP Rural
- RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

In addition, the RACGP approached a wide range of organisations and individuals inviting feedback on the program's proposed educational content, including:

- the Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM) of the Royal Australian College of Physicians
- Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- state and territory government departments of health

- leading academics and AOD subject matter experts
- healthcare education and training providers
- AOD service providers
- GPs who are members of the relevant RACGP Specific Interests networks, faculties and councils.

The RACGP received over 70 responses from organisations and individuals across the country. The feedback provided has enabled the RACGP to be responsive to the different education needs of GPs and the different treatment pathways in each state and territory across the country.

As a result of this feedback, the RACGP has:

- increased the number of places available in the Treatment Skills Training pathways
- broadened the program's eligibility criteria to include GPs treating a wider range of identified patient groups at risk of alcohol and other drug use
- improved access for rural GPs by introducing small discussion groups in some areas as an alternative to face-to-face workshops
- increased the number of facilitators that will be used at face-to-face workshops to allow for highly interactive case-based discussion and sharing of feedback, consistent with the best clinical educational principles.

The education program

Overview

During the course of a working week, every GP will see patients who, to varying extents, use AOD. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016:¹

- one out of 20 Australians have misused a prescription drug
- once a month or more, one in four Australians exceed the single-occasion risk guidelines for consumption of alcohol
- those in rural and remote regions, unemployed people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people who identify as homosexual or bisexual are more likely to drink excessively and use illicit drugs than those in other population groups.

According to the Australian Drug Foundation, 'people use drugs for many reasons; to relax, for enjoyment, to be part of a group, out of curiosity, as a coping mechanism or to minimise physical and/or psychological pain and trauma'.² Although the vast majority of those using AOD will not become dependent, many Australians are regularly putting themselves and others at potential harm as a result of their alcohol and drug use.¹

GPs currently have access to a range of high-quality, evidence-based educational resources about AOD and the harms associated with occasional and dependent use. However, patients will usually visit a GP for reasons other than their alcohol or drug use and will often not recognise its impact on their reason for visiting. Initiating a conversation about a patient's alcohol and drug use, then managing the outcomes of that conversation safely and effectively within the time constraints of general practice, can be extremely challenging.

The identified gap in the AOD education currently available is in the provision of practical ways GPs can support patients who are presenting in their practice, usually with other comorbidities that may be exacerbated by alcohol and other drug use.

The RACGP has therefore developed the AOD GP Education Program to help GPs:

- explore alcohol and other drug-related issues with their patients
- work collaboratively with colleagues to develop a whole-of-practice approach to the prescribing of pharmaceuticals to treat pain, insomnia and anxiety
- implement best practice approaches to safely and effectively support patients presenting with alcohol and other drug use to minimise harm and improve health and wellbeing.

As part of the AOD GP Education Program, the RACGP will provide information to members about the range of AOD education and other resources available to GPs in each state and territory. The RACGP will also collaborate closely with PHNs, Local Health Districts and other AOD treatment service providers to ensure local treatment pathways are promoted and utilised on a regional level.

How does the program structure work?

GPs are able to enter the AOD GP Education Program at three distinct points which are designed according to the level of experience of individual GPs.

The education program has been designed to enable GPs to progress and undertake advanced training should they consider this is relevant and appropriate to their practice. For example, GPs who undertake the Essential Skills Education may then wish to access Treatment Skills Training.

There is no requirement for GPs to undertake additional levels of training, and completion of Essential Skills Education is not required to progress further through the program.

Refer to [Appendix A: AOD GP Education Program training pathways and payments](#).

Essential Skills Education

Essential Skills Education will provide a skills update for GPs wanting to improve their approach to conversations about alcohol and drug use, identify at-risk groups and safely and effectively manage difficult patient behaviours that can arise during GP consults.

This education will support GPs to better screen for alcohol and drug use, assess patients' readiness for change and determine appropriateness of referring to AOD treatment services.

This education will be available online to all RACGP members via *gplearning* in April 2020.

Completion of the Essential Skills Education will take approximately two hours and will be accredited for continuing professional development in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program for the 2020–22 triennium.

Upon completion of Essential Skills Education, eligible GPs can apply for Treatment Skills Training.

Treatment Skills Training

Treatment Skills Training is designed for those GPs who would like to build on their knowledge and skills to enhance their ability to engage in safe, open and effective dialogue with their patients about their alcohol and drug use, gain their patient's confidence, assess their readiness for change, and determine an appropriate treatment plan.

In the Treatment Skills Training pathways, GPs are encouraged to build upon their knowledge and skills in the management of complex health conditions, using language and therapeutic techniques that develop and maintain patient trust.

The training aims to help GPs assess the reasons why a patient is using AOD, determine approaches to managing any physical or mental health comorbidities and, where appropriate, identify if the patient has a mild, moderate or severe substance use disorder.

Throughout the training GPs will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with treatment options most readily available to GPs and their practices. These could include harm minimisation strategies, safe implementation of GP-led home detox for alcohol or methamphetamine withdrawal, and pharmacotherapy for opioid dependence. The training would also support treatment pathways and ways to correctly and appropriately refer to local AOD treatment services.

Each training pathway will take eight hours to complete and will be accredited for continuing professional development in the CPD Program for the 2020–22 triennium.

Limited places are available for the Treatment Skills Training pathways. Eligibility criteria apply (refer to page 8).

Upon completion of Treatment Skills Training, eligible GPs may apply for Advanced Skills Training access.

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – Face-to-face education

Pathway no. 1 will be available for GPs in metropolitan, regional and more populated rural areas.

The face-to-face education sessions will be delivered by GP AOD educators as a series of short presentations followed by case-based discussion and self-reflection in small groups.

In larger metropolitan and regional areas, the workshops will be of 4–5-hour duration, followed four to six weeks later by a 1.5-hour small group online education session.

In more rural areas, education may be delivered as weekly small group discussions spanning three to four sessions.

Participants will be required to complete a predisposing activity and baseline survey, attend relevant education sessions, and complete a reinforcing activity and post-event survey.

Locations for face-to-face education sessions will be based upon areas of need and where there is a critical mass of GPs in practice. GPs practising in more rural and remote areas will be encouraged to take part in the Treatment Skills Pathway no. 2 or no. 3.

Any GP wishing to attend a face-to-face education session must apply to be a part of the AOD GP Education Program. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to attend an education session according to their nominated session preferences.

Upon completion of Treatment Skills Training, eligible GPs can apply for Advanced Skills Training.

Table 1. Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – Proposed events schedule

State/territory	Workshops	Small group sessions
NSW/ACT	4 Sydney 3 regional 2 rural	Up to five rural locations
Vic	3 Melbourne 1 regional 3 rural	Up to three rural locations
Qld	2 Brisbane 2 regional 4 rural	
WA	2 Perth 1 rural	Up to four rural locations
SA	2 Adelaide 1 rural	Up to three rural locations
NT		Up to four Darwin locations Up to three rural locations
Tas		Up to three Hobart locations Up to four rural locations

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning

Pathway no. 2 is designed for those GPs who would like to access a wide range of AOD educational content and best practice toolkits that they can complete at their own pace.

Program participants will be required to complete a mixture of core modules, optional modules, case studies and self-reflection exercises to the equivalent of eight hours of structured, self-directed learning. Participants will be able to contact GP mentors who will provide feedback and support for several months after completion of this pathway.

Participants will be required to complete a predisposing activity and baseline survey, the online education program, and a reinforcing activity and post-education survey.

At the completion of the AOD GP Education Program in June 2021, this education pathway will become available to all RACGP members as free, structured, self-directed AOD GP education, with ongoing future reviews and will be included in RACGP Curriculum resources to further embed these skills in future registrars.

Upon completion of Treatment Skills Training, eligible GPs can apply for Advanced Skills Training.

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 3 – Tele-education sessions

Pathway no. 3 is specifically designed to meet the needs of rural and remote GPs who require an alternative to face-to-face education. Residents in remote regions of Australia are particularly at risk of alcohol and drug use. GPs practising in these regions are themselves isolated, treating patients with often complex comorbidities without real-time support from colleagues or allied health professionals experienced in AOD.

This pathway aims to provide an educational experience that matches the power of face-to-face learning. The RACGP will use Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) to deliver these semi-structured, small group online learning sessions. Project ECHO blends short, didactic, evidence-based content with interactive case-based discussion, and a user experience of being supported not just by a team of mentors but by a network of peers.

Project ECHO is an educational framework that was developed in the United States and is now used in over 30 countries to deliver improved patient outcomes. Overseas implementation has demonstrated that by regularly participating in Project ECHO, GPs learn to provide excellent speciality care to patients in their own communities. Participants dial into Project ECHO sessions via zoom videoconferencing software, which is free for participants to download and use.

The AOD Project ECHO expert panels will consist of GP experts, addiction medicine specialists, nurse practitioners, pain medicine specialists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and patient representatives.

The AOD Project ECHO sessions will be scheduled at a regular time each week. The day and session time will be determined in 2020 in consultation with enrolled participants and expert panel member availability.

Each Project ECHO session will be 1.5 hours in duration. Participants will be required to attend a minimum of seven sessions of the 10-week education series. Enrolments in each Project ECHO series will be capped at 25 participants. Participants will be required to complete a predisposing activity and baseline survey, attend the relevant education sessions, and complete a reinforcing activity and post-event survey.

Upon completion of Treatment Skills Training, eligible GPs can apply for Advanced Skills Training.

Advanced Skills Training

Treatment options for AOD practitioners

Advanced Skills Training is for those GPs who wish to undertake advanced training to the equivalent of 20 hours of CPD to support treatment of alcohol and drug use in their community. Applicants to this pathway will be required to take on a leadership role and share their learning with others in their practice, in their region or in the supervision of general practice doctors in training.

Participants will be required to complete a predisposing activity and baseline survey, attend one 1.5-hour small group online education session specifically designed for Advanced Skills Training participants, participate in the relevant education and/or mentoring sessions, and complete a reinforcing activity and post-event survey.

Limited places are available for the Advanced Skills Training. Applicants must provide evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria. Any GP wishing to complete the Advanced Skills Training must apply to the AOD GP Education Program.

Successful applicants will receive an invitation to complete their Advanced Skills Training session in accordance with their nominated training preferences.

To determine eligibility for Advanced Skills Training, the RACGP will consider prior learning and evidence of practice-based experience. RACGP members may be eligible to access this training via one of two entry points.

Entry Point A

Entry Point A would be for recipients of a payment who have successfully completed Treatment Skills Training (refer to Appendix A for a map of training pathways and payments).

Entry Point B

RACGP members who provide evidence that they are currently treating patients for alcohol and drug use, and that they have prior learning in AOD, may be eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Training. Those wishing to access this training will need to make a separate grant application. Successful applicants are eligible to receive payment for only one Advanced Skills Training activity (refer below). On a case-by-case basis, applicants may be able to undertake a second training activity but will not receive any further payments for AOD GP Education Program completion.

Possible Advanced Skills Training activities

- Completion of two or more Treatment Skills Training pathways
- Completion of a training program on alcohol and other drug use within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Introducing GP-led home detox for alcohol dependency
- ‘Train the Trainer’ participation to introduce systems, processes and discussion groups to safely and effectively support patients with their alcohol and drug use at a whole-of-practice/regional level
- AOD mentoring program for GPs practising in custodial medicine
- ‘Train the Trainer’ participation to enhance educational outcomes for supervisors of general practice doctors in training

Requests for other types of targeted education or support will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applications to the AOD GP Education Program

Information-sharing protocols

During implementation of the AOD GP Education Program, the RACGP will be sharing application and completion data with a number of third parties. By making an application to the AOD GP Education Program, GPs will be providing consent for information to be shared with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and PHNs.

ACRRM has received federal government funding to deliver a similar AOD GP Education Program for its members. Those GPs who are members of both the RACGP and ACRRM will be able to access only one AOD GP Education Program.

The RACGP will consider requests from RACGP members who would prefer to attend education offered by ACCRM, as well as requests made by ACCRM members who wish to complete the Essential Skills Education or a Treatment Skills Training pathway offered by the RACGP. Accommodating these requests will be made on a case-by-case basis after mutual agreement has been established between ACCRM and the RACGP.

PHNs have received federal government funding to support the RACGP and ACRRM in promoting and marketing their AOD GP Education Programs. The RACGP will share application and completion data with PHNs to enable delivery of effective promotions and marketing activity.

AOD GP Education Program eligibility criteria

The AOD GP Education Program is available to RACGP members.

Essential Skills Education

All RACGP members will be able to access the Essential Skills Education via *gplearning* at no additional cost to annual membership fees.

Upon completion of Essential Skills Education, eligible GPs can apply for Treatment Skills Training.

Treatment Skills Training

RACGP members must provide evidence that they are currently treating patients in general practice.

Priority access to Treatment Skills Training pathways will be given to GPs:

- whose practice is located within 2019 Modified Monash Model (MMM) areas MM 4–7
- who regularly locum for extended periods of time within 2019 MMM areas MM 4–7
- treating large numbers of patients from identified groups at risk of alcohol and other drug use, including:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - LGBTQI people

- people in the justice system or custodial services
- people experiencing homelessness or in unstable housing
- people who have experienced abuse and violence and trauma
- people who are veterans.

Those GPs treating patients in metropolitan and regional areas (MM 1–3) that are also areas of identified socioeconomic disadvantage (as per Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas [SEIFA]) may also be eligible to access the program. GPs will be asked to reflect on the needs of their patients and provide evidence of their need for Treatment Skills Training.

Upon completion of Essential Skills Education, eligible GPs can apply for Treatment Skills Training.

Advanced Skills Training

RACGP members who are able to provide evidence of prior learning and who are currently treating patients for alcohol and drug use will be invited to apply for the Advanced Skills Training pathway.

As part of the program, applicants will need to develop an implementation plan for how they will use and share their learning with colleagues within their practice and/or region.

Priority access to Advanced Skills Training will be given to those GPs (or GP practices) treating patients in areas of identified socioeconomic disadvantage or identified groups at risk of alcohol and drug use, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- LGBTQI people
- people in the justice system or custodial services
- people experiencing homelessness or in unstable housing
- people who have experienced abuse and violence and trauma
- people who are veterans.

Payments for AOD GP Education Program completions

Essential Skills Education

The RACGP will offer this training at no additional cost to annual membership fees. CPD points will be allocated upon completion. There are no payments at this level.

Treatment Skills Training pathways

The RACGP will be offering 1800 spaces in total across the three Treatment Skills Training pathways.

The education provided in the AOD GP Education Program will be free of charge. Participants who successfully complete all the components within their Treatment Skills Training pathway will be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$1200, excluding GST and subject to relevant taxation, and will be provided with CPD points and a certificate of completion.

Advanced Skills Training pathway

The RACGP will be offering 300 spaces in total for the Advanced Skills Training pathway.

The education provided in the AOD GP Education Program will be free of charge.

Participants who successfully complete all components within the Advanced Skills Training pathway will be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$2500, excluding GST and subject to relevant taxation, and will be provided with CPD points and a certificate of completion.

Eligibility for rural travel subsidy

Those GPs residing in rural areas (MM 4–7) whose preference is to attend a face-to-face education session as part of the Treatment Skills Training Pathway no. 1 may be eligible for a rural travel subsidy. The subsidy is calculated according to the participant's location, their preferred training location and whether overnight accommodation is required. The rural subsidy is capped at \$1000 excluding GST and subject to relevant taxation for those GPs living in remote regions.

GPs will be able to request access to the rural travel subsidy when applying to the AOD GP Education Program. Those GPs approved access will be informed of funding caps associated with the subsidy and can plan their travel arrangements accordingly.

GPs will need to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements prior to attendance at education sessions. Payment of the rural subsidy will be processed upon completion of their Treatment Skills Training.

Program implementation schedule

The RACGP will implement the AOD GP Education Program as follows:

Training dates and locations made available online	2 December 2019
RACGP member applications to access Treatment Skills Training open	2 December 2019
Publication of drug and alcohol resource database	2 December 2019
Essential Skills Education available via <i>gplearning</i>	Early 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – Face-to-face education commences	March 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 3 – Tele-education sessions commence	March 2020
RACGP member applications to access Advanced Skills Training open	April 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning available via <i>gplearning</i>	October 2020
Applications to the program close	April 2021
Program delivery concludes	30 June 2021

Contact

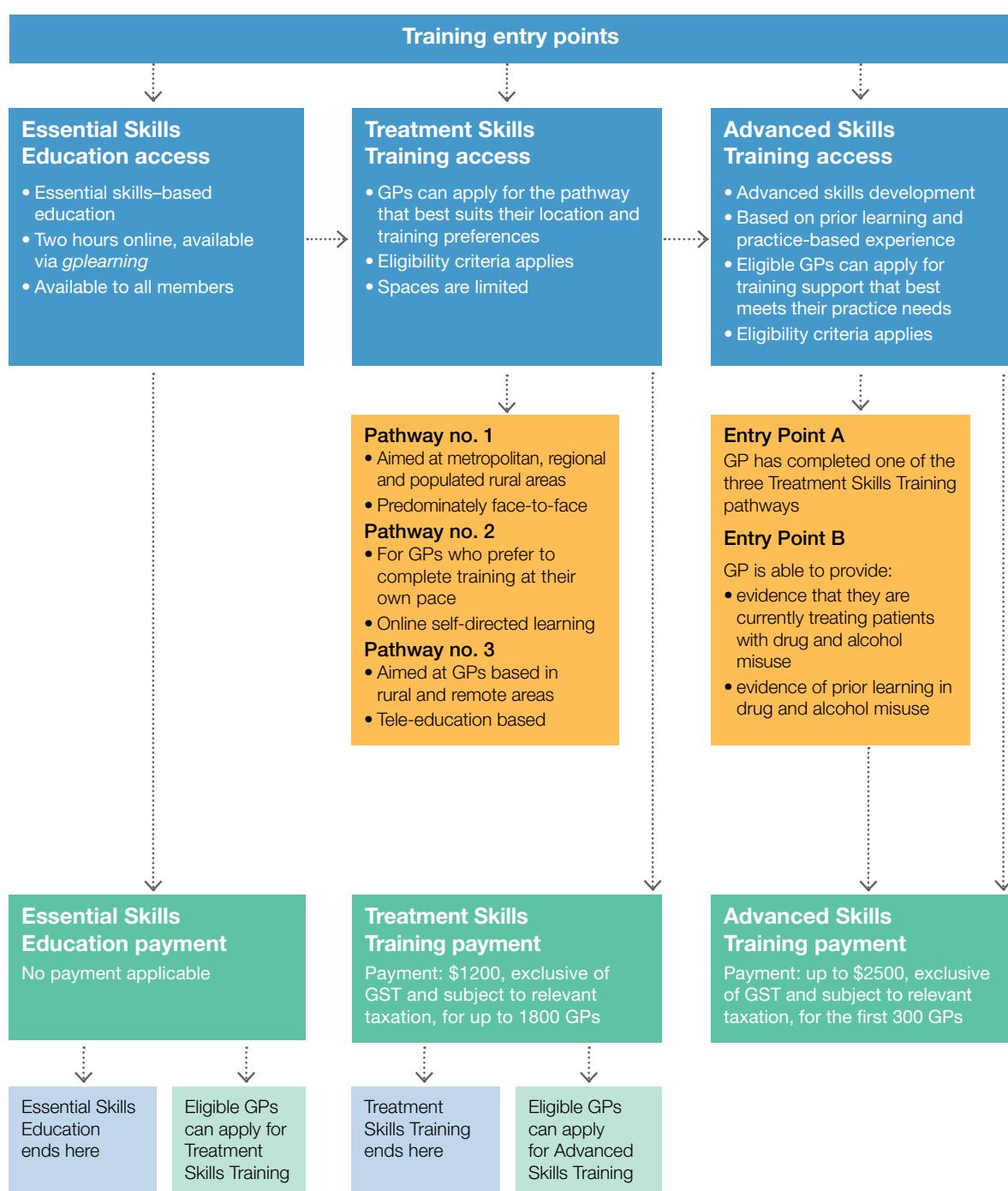
For more information about the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program, please visit www.racgp.org.au/aod, email aod@racgp.org.au or phone 1800 472 247.

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016L Detailed findings. Drug Statistics series no. 31. Cat. no. PHE 214. Canberra: AIHW, 2017; p. x-xi.
2. Alcohol and Drug Foundation. Alcohol and drug use. Melbourne: ADF, 2019. Available at <https://adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use> [Accessed 2 October 2019].

Appendix A: AOD GP Education Program training pathways and payments

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program Training pathways and payments





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