



Drug Education Network and Department of Education

WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT HARM FROM DRUGS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION.



Introduction to DEN

Founded in 1986, the Drug Education Network (DEN) is a state-wide, not-for-profit organisation funded to improve the wellbeing of Tasmanians. DEN provides organisations and individuals with evidence-based alcohol and other drug related services including the provision of training, resources and connections.

DEN neither condones nor condemns the use of drugs. Rather, it acknowledges that drug use exists irrespective of legal status or societal norms. DEN's goal is to meet people where they are and encourage an open dialogue that empowers the individual to be the primary agent of their own physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

DEN is governed by a board of directors who hold a range of skills and expertise including public policy, education and research.

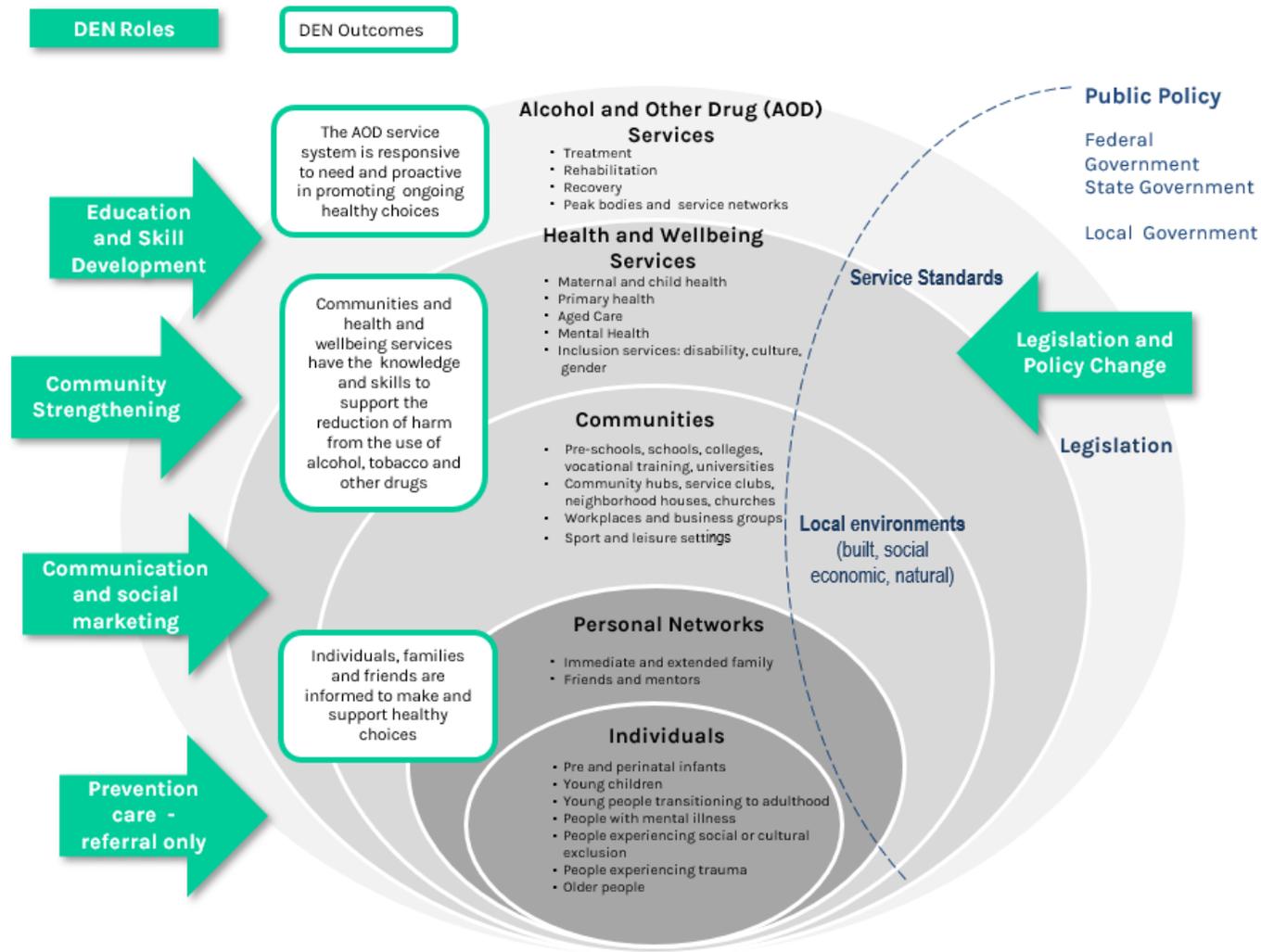
DEN's staff are highly committed and skilled, with its Educators and Project Officers holding a number of recognised qualifications including:

- Bachelor of Education
- Tasmanian Teacher's Certificate
- Master of Public Health
- Master of Social Work
- Bachelor of Social Work
- Diploma of Social Science
- Certificate IV Community Services
- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Focus and Roles

The infographic below depicts the role that DEN plays in preventing and reducing harms from drugs through education and leadership.

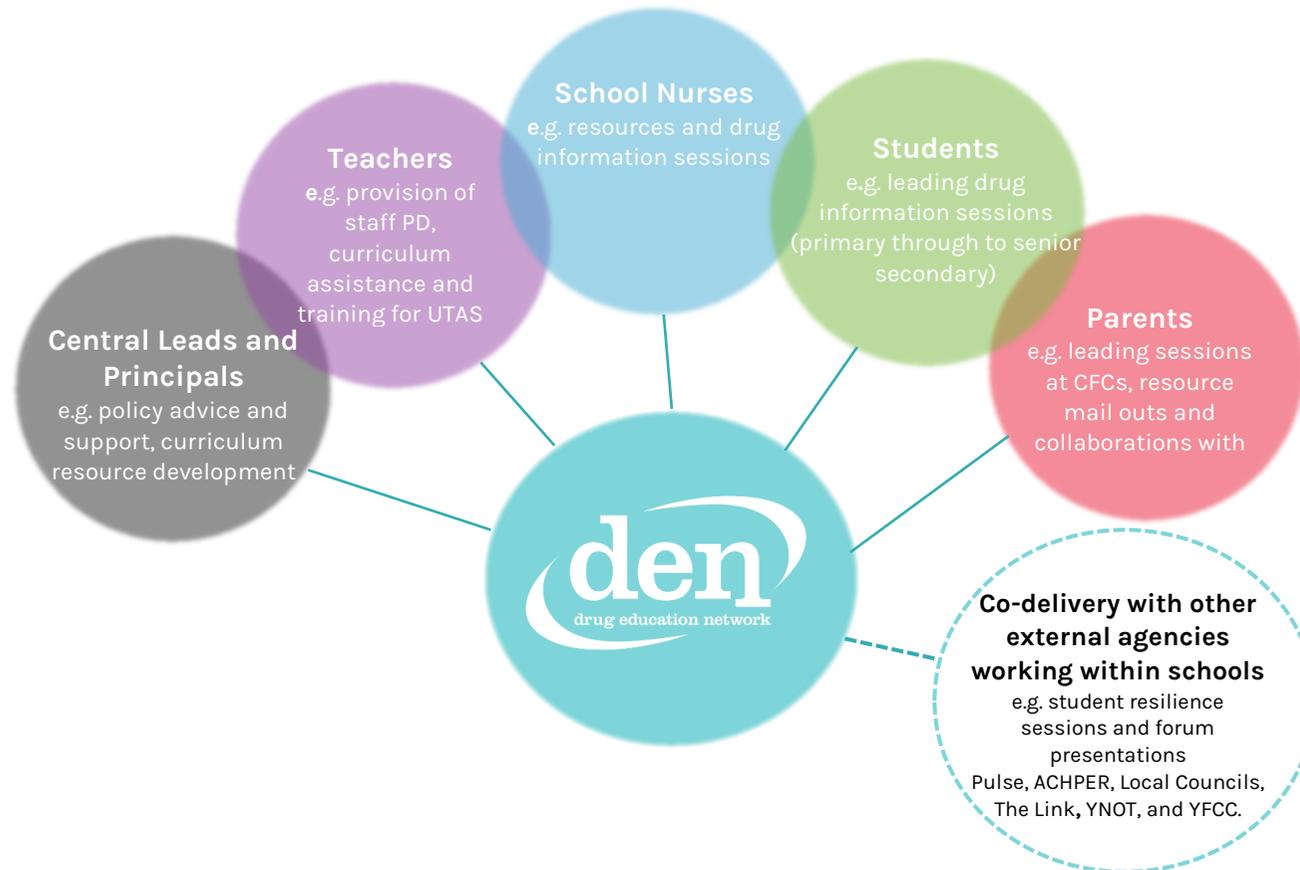
DEN - Focus and Roles



DEN's History with the Department of Education

DEN has had a strong relationship with the Department of Education (the Department) since the early 1990's with the Secretary in 1995 nominating a senior staff member, Judy Travers, to sit on the Board and provide insight from a Departmental perspective. Over the years Judy has facilitated interactions between DEN and the Department's Curriculum Services business unit and connected DEN with teachers and schools. In 2014 an additional Departmental employee, Emma Lovibond, joined the Board as a private interest. DEN provides services across all levels of education, from central policy development through to facilitation of classroom discussions on matters related to alcohol and other drugs.

The diagram below depicts examples of services provided by DEN in the last eighteen months:



Further Collaboration Opportunities

Below are some suggested areas where the Department and DEN could work together to further progress their shared wellbeing objectives:

1. Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021

The Department's Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021: Focus for 2020 "Physical Wellbeing and the Environment" names alcohol and other drugs as a key focus area. This suggests that DEN's expert support and service provision to schools will be in demand. From its strong relationships with principals, teachers, school nurses and TASSO, DEN holds significant insight into the needs of both schools and students and the challenges in achieving effective and sustainable curriculum-based approaches to alcohol and other drug education. DEN's practice, method and framework for drug education aligns to the **2020 Focus**. The Australian Government's [Principles for School Drug Education](#) inform DEN's evidenced based approach to drug education in schools.

DEN would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Department's Child and Student Wellbeing team to develop actions for 2020 and enhance the data collection in this area.

2. NEW Primary School Resource: Piratz Pilot Project

Primary schools play a key role in building alcohol and other drug protective factors in students through education. DEN is developing a resource for primary students from Grades 1 through to 6. This resource has one clear purpose: to provide age-appropriate information about health and wellbeing, embedded within engaging and enjoyable learning experiences for children. The resource is designed to assist educators to help children meet key intended learning outcomes described in the Australian Curriculum related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD), nutrition and mental health.

The teaching tool has 3 main components:

1. The Piratz Board game - playable by up to 4 students at one time or up to 8 students playing in groups;
2. Teacher directed discussion questions, in the form of situational cards, supported by colour coded assessment rubrics;
3. An online quiz - used to consolidate learning. This can be used as a pre-test or taken after playing the game.



DEN aims to Pilot this resource with 3 primary schools in early 2020 in order to evaluate the resource following successful permissions and ethics approval.

DEN would welcome support from the Department in piloting this resource.

3. Further resourcing for DEN's services

DEN's approach to drug and alcohol education in school settings requires a level of staffing capacity to support a school over an extended period. This is in order to establish a relationship and build school staff confidence, skills and capacity to engage in drug education with ongoing, but not sole support from DEN.

Provision for ongoing classroom support regarding the use of these resources in alcohol and other drug educational sessions is limited, due to limited funded capacity and currently DEN does not fully meet the requested level of intensive support service for schools.

In response to requests from teachers, school social workers and nurses DEN has recently developed, in conjunction with our partners, National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Australia [NOFASD AUS], a training for school staff to raise awareness of the prevalence of FASD and to share evidence informed and appropriate, behaviour management and support information. This training is scheduled to be delivered to school nurses early in 2020.

DEN would welcome further opportunities for funded activities within schools and colleges.

4. Board Renewal

After nearly 25 years on the DEN Board, Judy Travers has announced she will be retiring at the end of 2019. Judy has facilitated and promoted this collaborative partnership between DEN and the Department which has created opportunities for many school communities across the State.

DEN would welcome the nomination of another Departmental expert to join the Board who is able to provide insights from a school perspective.



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