

Divisions along a new road to addiction

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"One drinks too many and a thousand's never enough."

This has been the mantra for people struggling with alcoholism, warning them against the dangers of having "just one." But what if you had a drink problem and could still have the occasional beer? Could a heroin addict continue to shoot up and consider themselves on the road to recovery?

As Australia grapples with the rise in illicit drug use and a binge drinking culture that shows no signs of abating, a new breed of addiction specialists are reshaping the way we view this complex and insidious problem.

Born out of the United States, and also burgeoning in Britain, the "recovery" movement aims to challenge community perceptions of addiction by not only publicly celebrating those working their way out of it, but by redefining what it means to be substance dependent. While still in the fledgling stages in Australia, it's already causing division within the drug and alcohol treatment sector.

Its most controversial tenet is that abstinence is a personal choice not a necessity. What it means to be recovering from drug or alcohol abuse is, according to the movement's guiding principles, "experienced and defined by the individual". In essence, recovery



Photo: Meredith O'Shea

Kim Riley, who has been sober for 3½ years, says recovery is above all about hope.