



# Stigma and its impact – the lack of Social Justice



Despite the fact that the use of alcohol and other drugs is wide spread throughout the world.....

**there exists a marked prejudice towards people who become addicted**

People with addictions experience –

Stigmatisation

Discrimination

Marginalisation

A situation that is further compounded  
for people with an addiction and a mental health condition

Wyong Shire has a higher rate of incidence per 100,000 compared with the State average for a number of criminal activities.

These include domestic violence related assault, sexual assault, steal from dwelling and malicious damage to property.

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics figures show Wyong Shire experienced an increase in recorded crime incidents of non domestic violence related assault.

Community Safety is the major concern of local residents.

Local residents said they feared the residents of The Salvation Army Recovery Centre threatening their personal safety, potentially being under the influence of drugs (in particular) and behaving irrationally which may be harmful to local residents, stealing from their homes, stealing their cars and living in constant fear of the potential threat The Salvation Army Recovery Centre residents could pose.

Residents were concerned that The Salvation Army Recovery Centre would attract drug users and drug dealers and these people could also threaten their safety.

Some residents expressed concern that residents at The Salvation Army Recovery Centre would have mental illness and they could pose a threat to the community.

In particular participants were concerned about residents with a dual diagnosis.

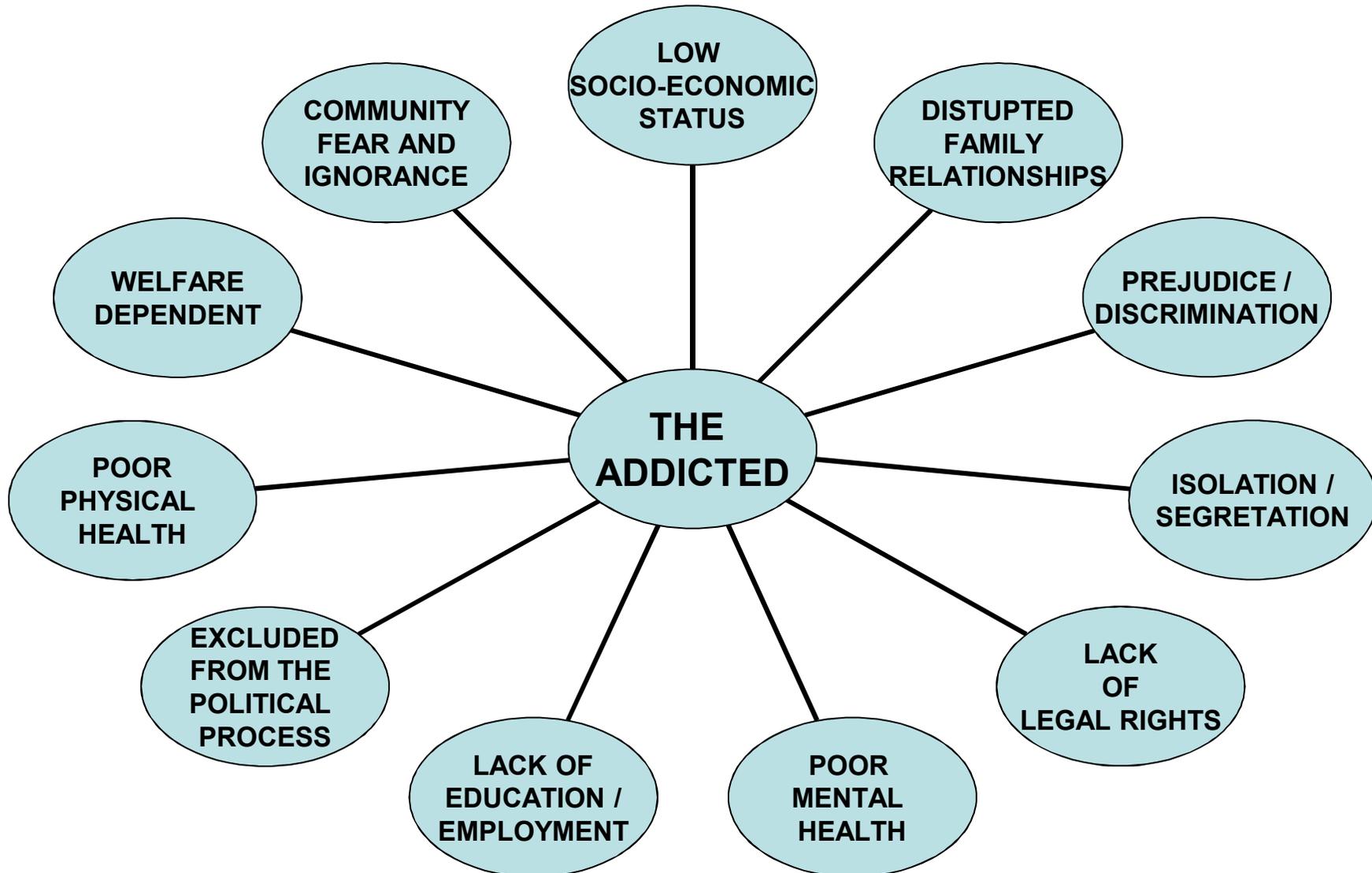
Local residents were concerned that these residents of The Salvation Army Recovery Centre could become violent.

Many said it would be a major impact on their lifestyle and would impede on the reason why they lived in the area.

Others said they would no longer walk and ride in the forests and they would lock their homes during the day even when they were at home.

**Police from the Local Area Command and Morisset Police Station said that they did not predict an increase in crime as a result of The Salvation Army Recovery Centre being located at Dooralong and that the existing Centre had not caused any problems.**

<b>HEROIN USERS</b>	<b>FORMER HEROIN USERS</b>	<b>DISABLED PEOPLE</b>
<b>Anger (56%)</b>	<b>Anger (45%)</b>	<b>Anger (2%)</b>
<b>Sympathy (29%)</b>	<b>Sympathy (21%)</b>	<b>Sympathy (21%)</b>
<b>Pity (27%)</b>	<b>Pity (26%)</b>	<b>Pity (7%)</b>
<b>Compassion (21%)</b>	<b>Compassion (29%)</b>	<b>Compassion (48%)</b>
<b>Sadness (21%)</b>	<b>Respect (12%)</b>	<b>Sadness (9%)</b>
<b>Disgust (21%)</b>	<b>Disgust (14%)</b>	<b>Admiration (9%)</b>



## The five “A’s” of social justice

**Availability**

**Accessibility**

**Affordability**

**Acceptability**

**Adaptability**

Unlike other conditions that impact on individuals addiction is viewed as being an individual problem

and is the responsibility of the individual to fix

Depending on the person's socioeconomic or celebrity status their AOD problems tend to be either medicalised or criminalised.

Addiction is often considered to be

than other social problems



More difficult to accept / understand

More mysterious

Maybe even "evil"

and so therefore are the people that have an addiction



**Mainstream services often do not have the capacity to understand the impact of social issues such as -**

- “ Ethnicity / Culture**
- “ Class separation**
- “ Gender**
- “ Violence**
- “ Abuse**

**on people with an addiction**

**People with AOD problems often have a range of issues -**

- ” Health**
- ” Legal**
- ” Career / Job**
- ” Financial**
- ” Social**

**These - coupled with their AOD situation places them at significant disadvantage.**

**How prejudiced is society towards people an AOD problem?**

**How easy is it for current or former addicts to gain employment?**

**How difficult is it for them to access health services?**

**How difficult is it for them to have the same opportunities the rest of society has?**

**How does this conspire to keep them where they are?**

## **Preventing stigmatisation should be the goal of a socially just and caring society**

Providing people with an addiction with a:

Fair starting point

Equal opportunity

The ability to compete and succeed in society.

## **Within the context of the AOD Sector -**

**Do we use socially just principles in planning services for people with addictions?**

**Are we planning services on a basis of need and equality rather than on 'merit' or prejudice?**

## Stigma involves

- Labelling
- Stereotyping
- Social Rejection
- Social Exclusion
- Social Extrusion

The stigma attached to addiction is a major obstacle to recovery.

It leads to the internalisation of community attitudes in the form of shame.

**It contributes to:**

**The marginalisation of people with an addiction.**

**Relapse.**

**Limits the resources allocated to treatment agencies.**