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# **Message in a Bottle**

## **Alcohol Harm Reduction Project**

### **Project Evaluation**

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# Review Purpose and Scope

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- Following is a Review of Beyond Empathy's Message in a Bottle (MiaB) Alcohol Harm Reduction Project
- The Review seeks to provide an overview of the:
  - Structure and objectives of the MiaB Program
  - Participant group involved in the Program
  - Activities conducted as part of the Program
  - Arts based intervention framework applied in the Program and
  - Participant benefits obtained by participants from or through the Program
- The above Review has been prepared based on documentation and data provided to the Reviewer by Beyond Empathy including:
  - A detailed Program logic statement
  - Program activity and participation outline
  - Post-program evaluation interview results
  - Examples of artwork produced through the MiaB Program including digital stories, short films and music
- The above data and documentation has been collected, selected and / or prepared by Beyond Empathy and has not been audited by the Reviewer for completeness or accuracy
- It is understood that all data collection undertaken to inform this Review has been undertaken in compliance with appropriate ethical standards

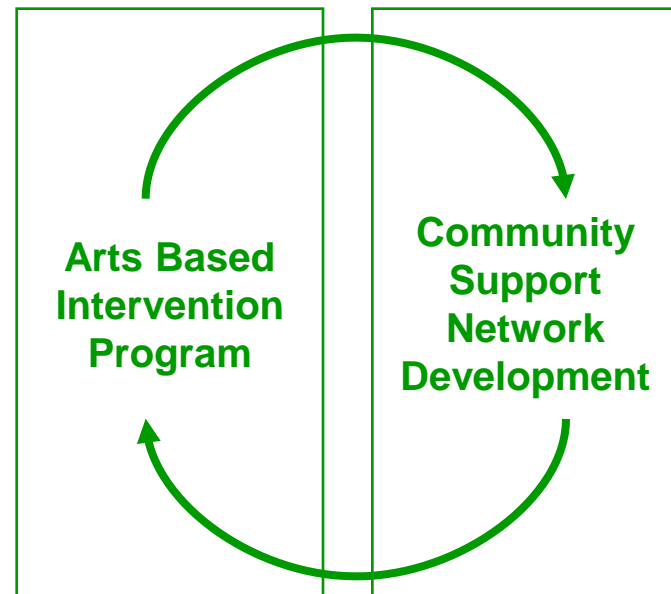
# Beyond Empathy works with marginalised young people, support agencies and community members to build social cohesion and influence social change

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## Organisation Overview

- Beyond Empathy is a community arts based organisation
- It delivers a range of arts based intervention programs that aim to work with marginalised young people and support agencies / workers to:
  - Engage marginalised young people and their families
  - Promote community awareness of the issues facing participants, address negative stereotypes and build social connectedness
  - Connect participants with local support service providers, strengthen personal support networks and increase access to support services
  - Build personal wellbeing and resilience and develop personal, basic life and vocational skills
- Beyond Empathy uses an asset based model of social change that focuses on people's assets rather than their issues or problems
- It seeks to work with marginalised young people, support agencies and community members to build social cohesion and influence social change

## Beyond Empathy Model



## Art Influencing Change

*Arts Based Intervention Programs used to:*

- *Influence how communities connect with young people*
- *Influence how young people see themselves and their future*
- *Influence how communities support young people and foster social change*

# Message in a Bottle (MiaB) is an arts based alcohol harm reduction program conducted by Beyond Empathy

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## Program Overview

- Message in a Bottle (MiaB) is an arts based alcohol harm reduction program conducted by Beyond Empathy
- The Program uses periodic, short term arts based intervention workshops to work with marginalised young people negatively impacted by drug and alcohol misuse (through direct consumption and / or family or peer misuse) and community based drug and alcohol and support service workers to address drug and alcohol misuse
- The Project has been conducted in ten (10) communities / local areas in regional north-eastern New South Wales (Moree Region (including Mungindi, Walgett, Boggabilla, Toomelah), Armidale, Tamworth, Inverell, Lismore, Casino, Narrabri,, Nambucca, Bowraville and Macksville)
- A series of seventy 3 - 5 day workshops have been held in the above communities over a period of twenty months
- The workshops have been based around a range of art forms and have involved participating young people and workers in the production of a range of art products including digital stories, short films, music and visual arts
- The art produced through the above workshops has been used to produce local performance and exhibition outcomes and has provided materials for use in participant led peer to peer education activities
- In some cases the conduct of MiaB workshops has been linked to or involved the delivery of TAFE / TAFE accredited course components providing participants with exposure to vocational training and linking participants to local TAFE or alternative education providers
- In many cases, MiaB participants used their involvement in the MiaB Program to access other Beyond Empathy activities including Beyond Empathy's Leadership and Emerging Artist Programs
- Beyond Empathy Leadership and Emerging Artist Program participants have also used the MiaB Program as an opportunity to develop their skills, acting as (co)facilitators, emerging artists and peer educators or mentors

# The MiaB Program has involved more than 386 primary participants ...

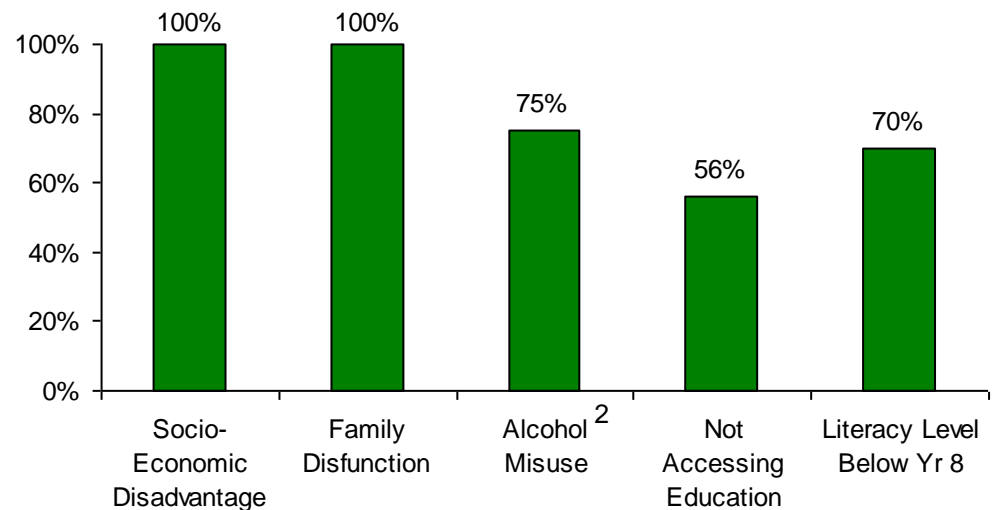
Participant Group	#
Young People (Participants)	386
AOD / Support Workers	21
Professional Artists	12
Emerging Artists	7
Beyond Empathy Leadership Program Participants	23
Total	449
Beyond Empathy Staff	9

## Participant Group Profile<sup>1</sup>

**Age Group** - 12 - 25 years (90%), remaining participants aged less than 10 years and involved in the Program through their parents or siblings or school based workshops

**Cultural Background** - 86% Indigenous

### Percentage Participant Group (Best Estimate)



- Note (1) Participant Profile Data based on information provided by participants in the course of workshop activities / observed attributes.  
 (2) Alcohol use more than three times per week and more than five drinks per session.

# ... in 70 workshops between March 2006 and December 2007 and has resulted in the delivery of more than 20 public performance or exhibition outcomes

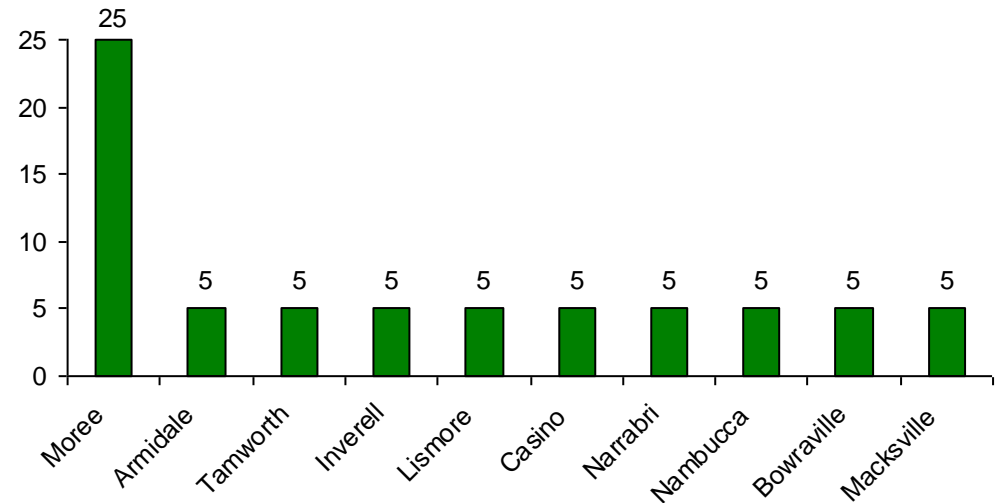
## Activity Profile

Activity	#
Workshops	70
Art Based Products	34
MiaB Public Outcomes*	22

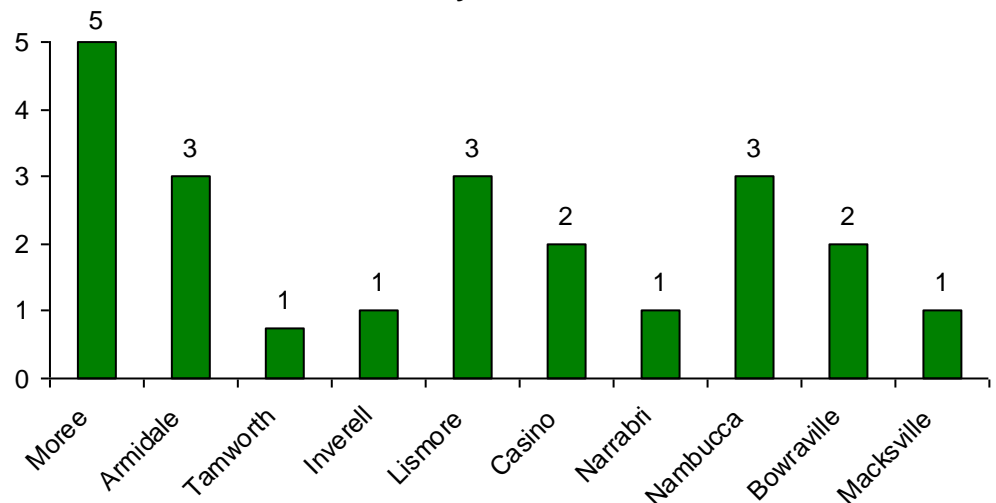
Additional Public Outcomes	3
MySpace Hits	3,200

Estimated Avg MiaB Audience*	300
Estimated Total MiaB Audience*	6,600
Estimated Additional Public Outcome Audience	15,000

Workshops / Community



Public Outcomes / Community



# MiaB workshops have been used to **engage** participants, **inform** them about drug and alcohol related issues, **connect** them with support workers and **support** attitudinal and behavioural change

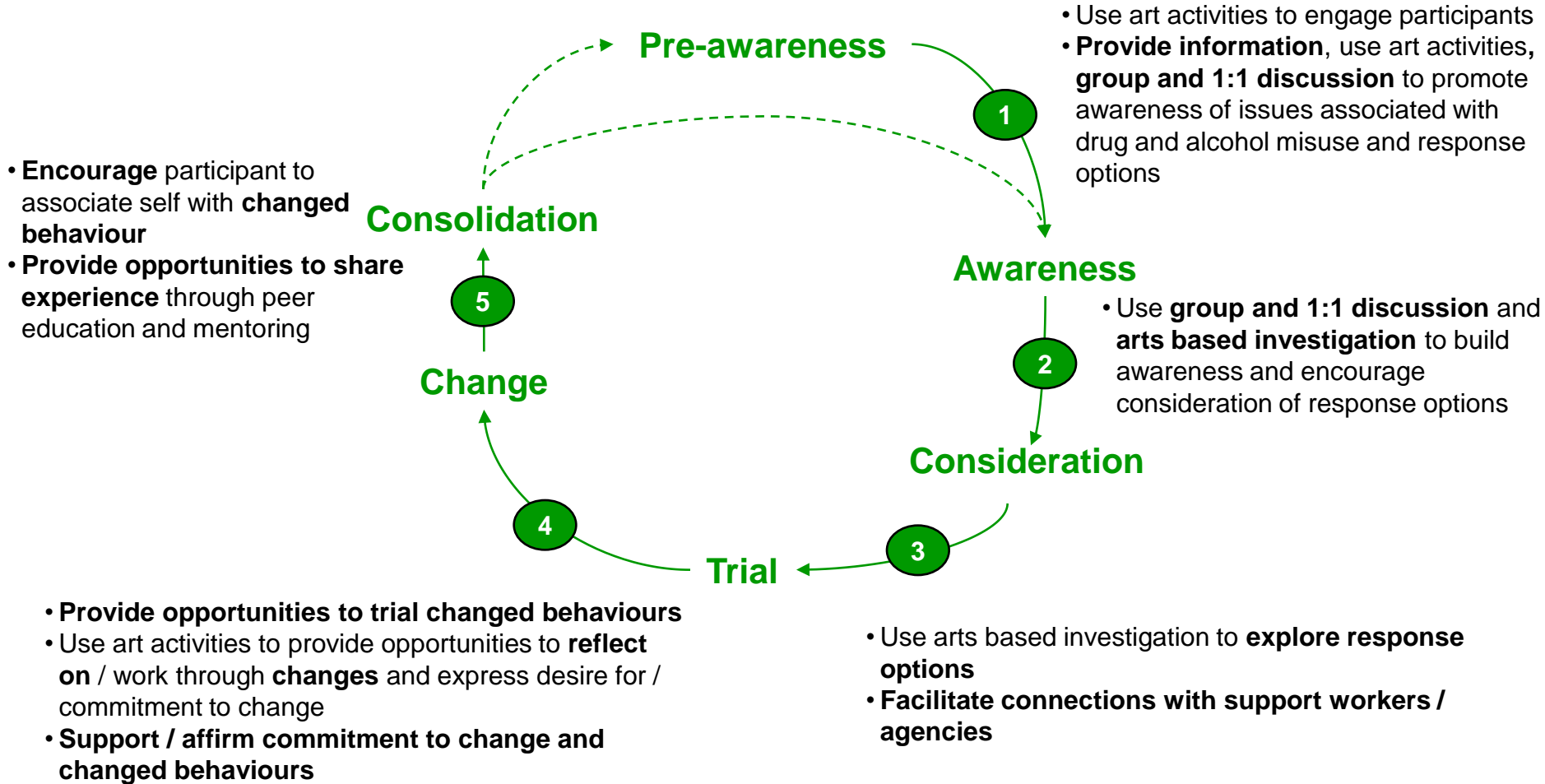
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- The art workshops conducted through the MiaB Program have been used to:
  - Engage participating young people
  - Provide information in relation to drug and alcohol related issues
  - Provide a forum for discussion in relation to those issues both through direct discussion in a group and 1:1 format and investigation through the production art products
  - Build awareness of local drug and alcohol support services
  - Foster connections between workshop participants and drug and alcohol support service staff and community workers through their joint involvement in program workshops and attendance at public performance outcomes
  - Strengthen participant support networks and increase access to support services
  - Develop support worker skills to facilitate ongoing engagement with participants and other members of the target group outside of the MiaB Program
  - Promote target group and broader community awareness of drug and alcohol related issues and response pathways through peer to peer education and public performance outcomes
  - Build personal wellbeing and resilience and develop personal and general life management skills

# Art based tools have been used to help participants to explore the impact that drug and alcohol misuse has on their lives and the ways that they can reduce the harm that it causes

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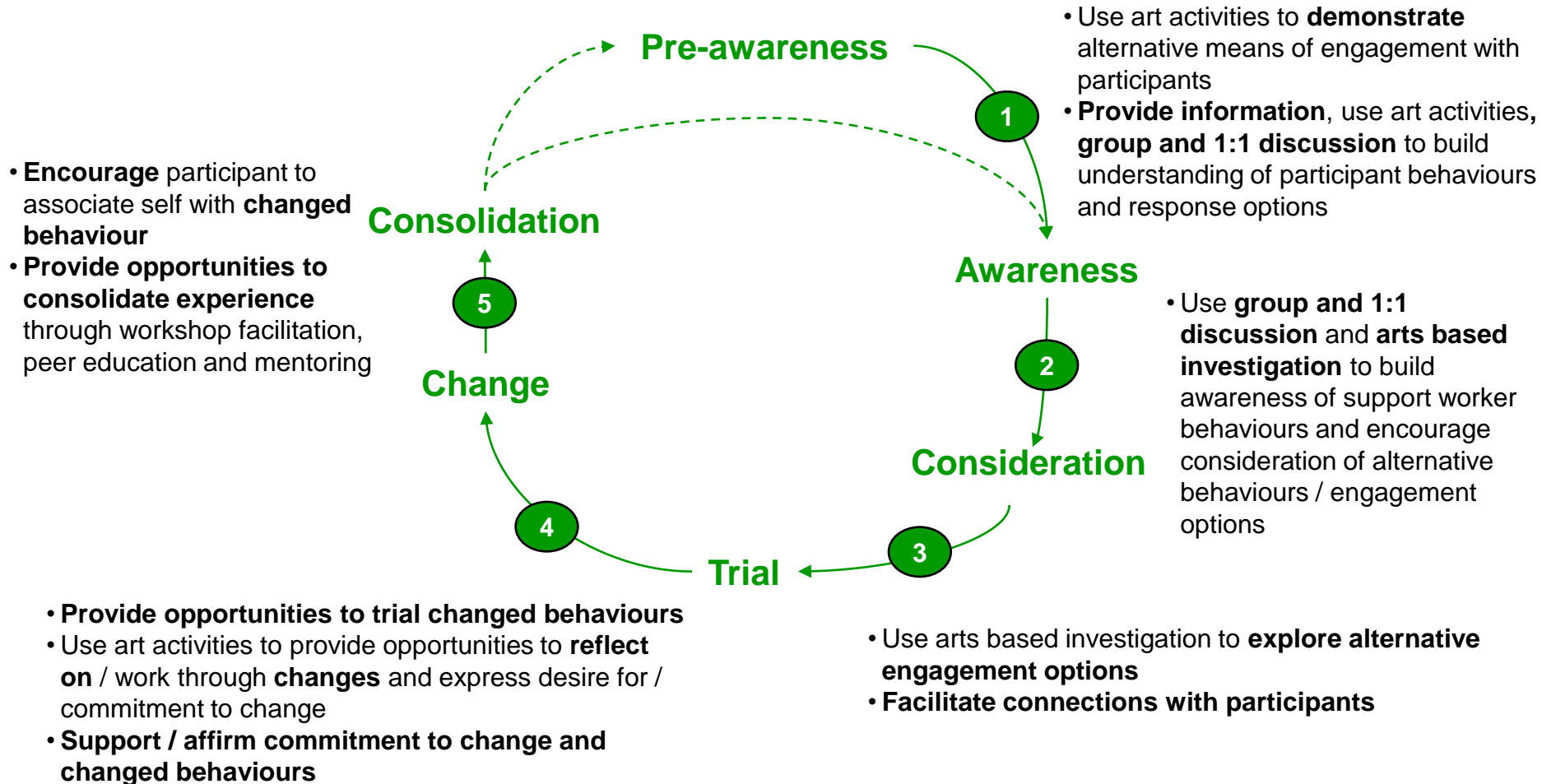
## Supported Change Model Underlying MiaB Workshops Participant Lense



# They have also been used to help support workers (and artists) to better understand participants and explore different ways of connecting and working with them

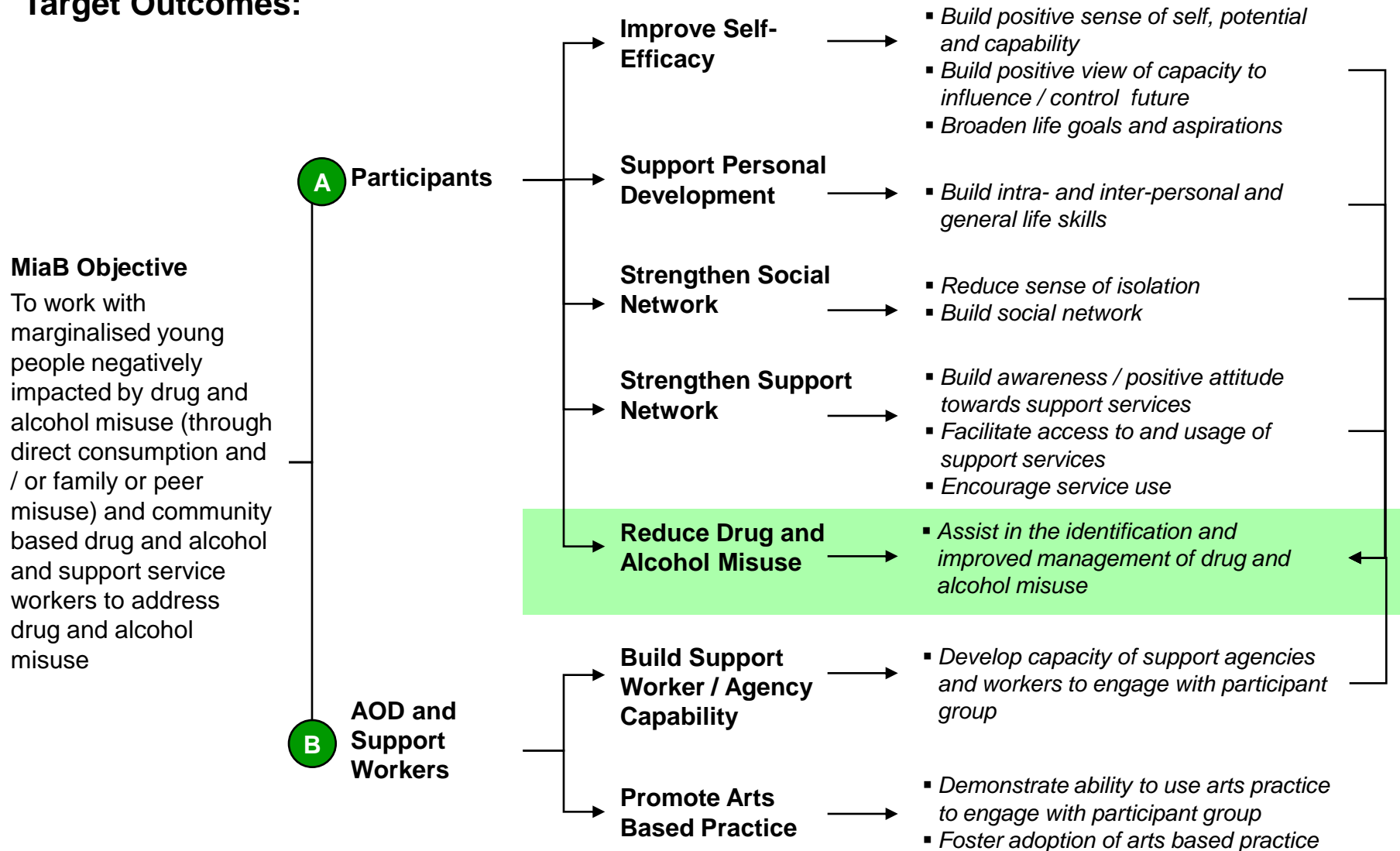
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## Supported Change Model Underlying MiaB Workshops Support Worker Lens



# The MiaB Program has sought to reduce drug and alcohol misuse and the harm that it causes by working with participants and support workers on multiple levels

## Target Outcomes:

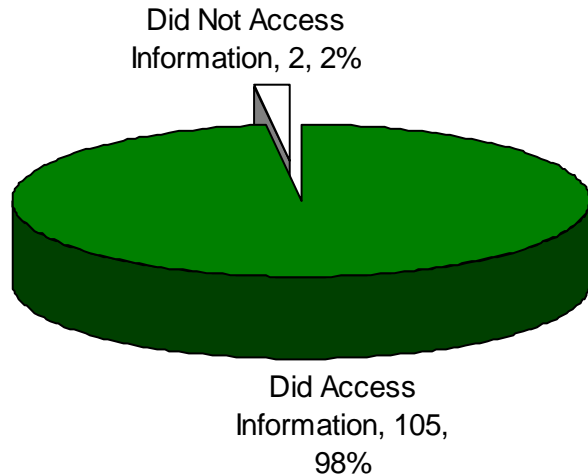


# Evaluation data indicate that the MiaB Program has played a positive role in helping to build awareness of drug and alcohol issues, identify local support services and support short term change

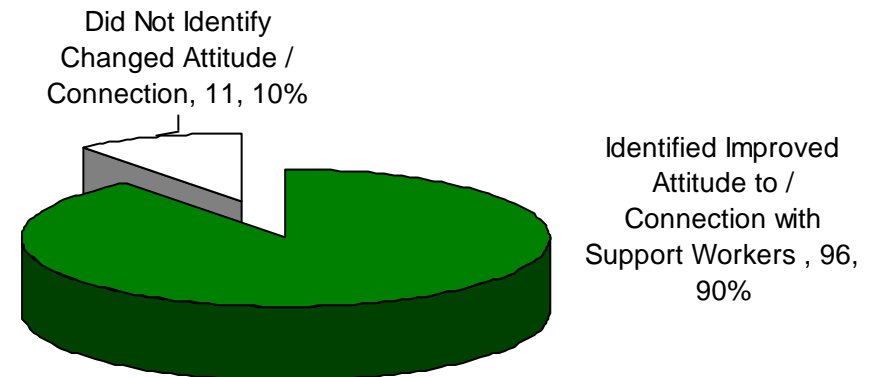
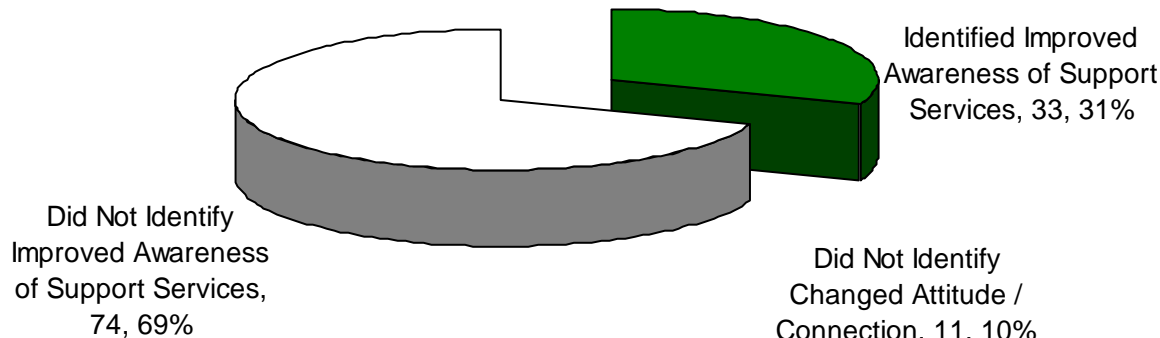
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- Program evaluation interviews were conducted with a sample of 107 MiaB Program participants in May and September 2007 (equating to ~28% of total the MiaB participant base)
- The sample population was made up of participants from eight (8) of the ten (10) MiaB communities (Moree Region, Armidale, Tamworth, Lismore, Narrabri, Nambucca, Bowraville and Macksville)
- Sample participants included workshop participants, peer educators and BE Leadership participants
- 98% of those participants were indigenous (slightly higher than in the overall Program population base)
- ~60% of the sample were male and ~40% female
  
- The above interviews were conducted in 1:1 discussions between the Beyond Empathy Youth Support Worker and participants
- Interviewed participants were asked a series of questions to try to identify:
  - Their attitude to drug and alcohol use
  - Their drug and alcohol use profile
  - The benefits (if any) that they had taken away from the MiaB Program in relation to:
    - Understanding of drug and alcohol use / misuse
    - Access to information
    - Awareness of, connection with, and usage of local drug and alcohol and support services
    - Changes in attitude to drug and alcohol use
    - Changes to drug and alcohol use
  
- Data collected through the above interviews indicate that the MiaB Project has had a significant impact on participant's:
  - Access to information
  - Awareness of local drug and alcohol and support services
  - Attitude towards / apparent comfort in engaging with local support workers
  - Attitude to drug and alcohol use
  - Reduction in drug and alcohol use

# The MiaB Program was identified by participants as providing them with access to information, helping them to identify support services and providing an opportunity for them to get to know local support workers



- **98%** (105) of participants interviewed identified that they had **accessed information** relating to drug and alcohol misuse through MiaB workshops
- 40% (42) of those 105 participants indicated that they had relied on verbal information because they found the written material too hard to read
- **31%** (33) of participants interviewed indicated that they had **become aware of support services** that they had not previously been aware of through the workshops
- **90%** (96) identified that the workshops had provided them with an opportunity to **meet support workers** and that they felt that the workshops had helped to break down barriers with those workers and took away the shame of having to present at the local health service "like there was something wrong with you"

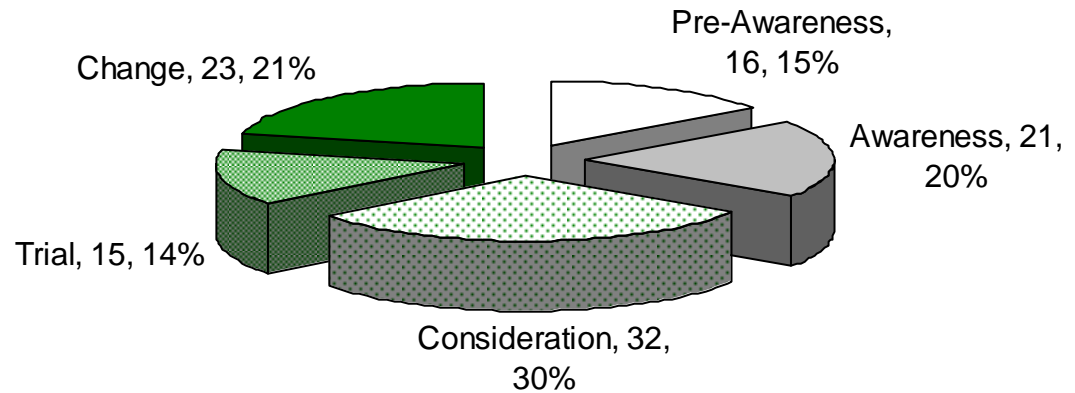


# A number of participants identified that they were aware that their drug and alcohol use was harmful ...

## Participant Change Profile

- Of the 105 participants interviewed **20%** (21) identified as being **aware** that their drug and alcohol use was having a negative impact on them and / or their friends and family
- A further **30%** (32) indicated that they **wanted to change** their drug and alcohol use and that they were starting to talk to people about it
- A further **35%** (38) indicated that they were either **trialing changes** to better manage their drug or alcohol use (14%, 15) **or** that they had **changed** their **behaviour** and reduced their drug and alcohol consumption (21%, 23)
- It is not clear from the data that was collected what the level of the above changes were or how long they have been maintained following the completion of the Program
- It is known that 4 participants formally enrolled in drug management or rehabilitation programs to address their drug and alcohol usage issues

Participant Breakdown Based on Status in Change Cycle (based on self-assessed status against drug and alcohol management spectrum)

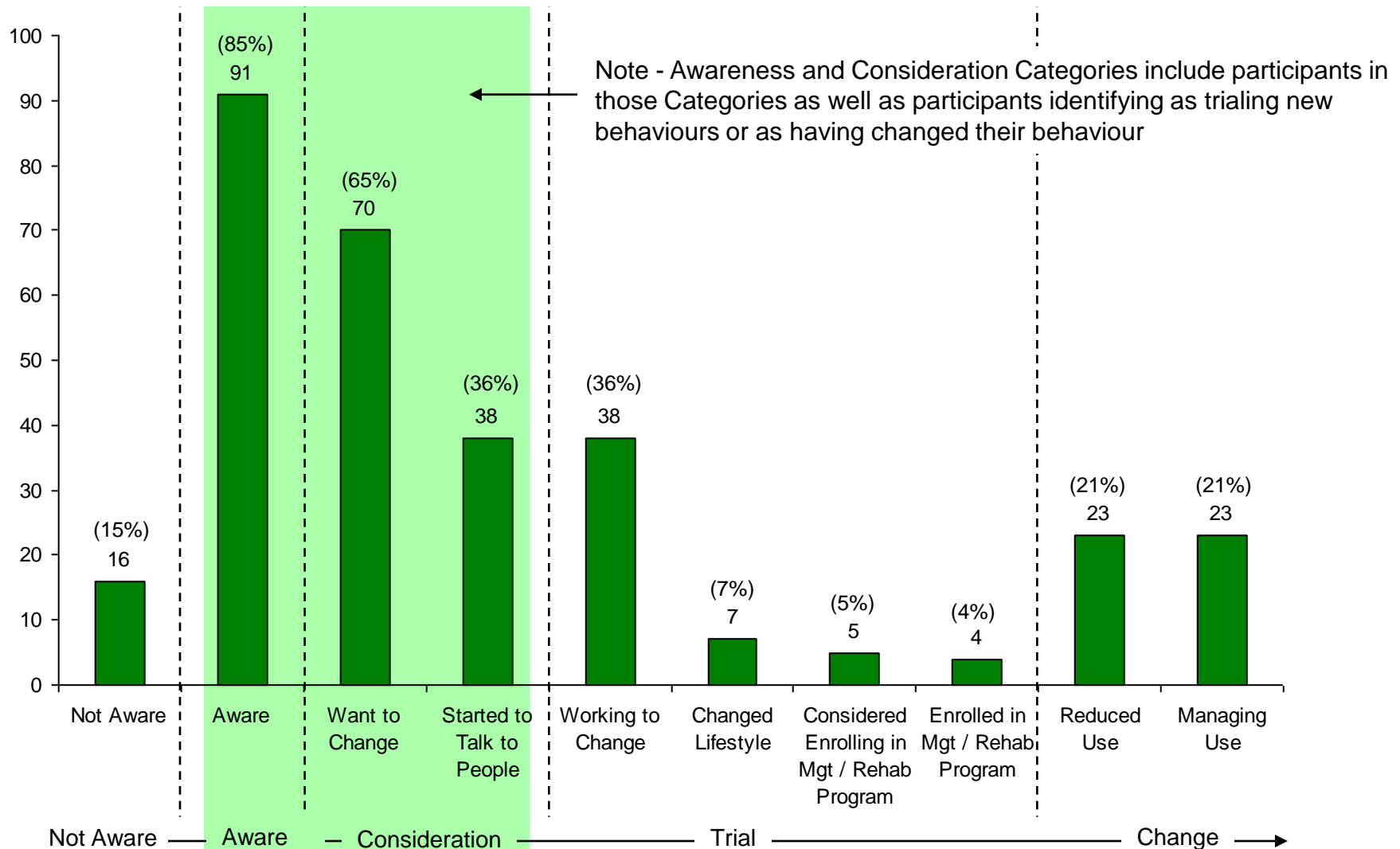


## Drug and Alcohol Management Spectrum

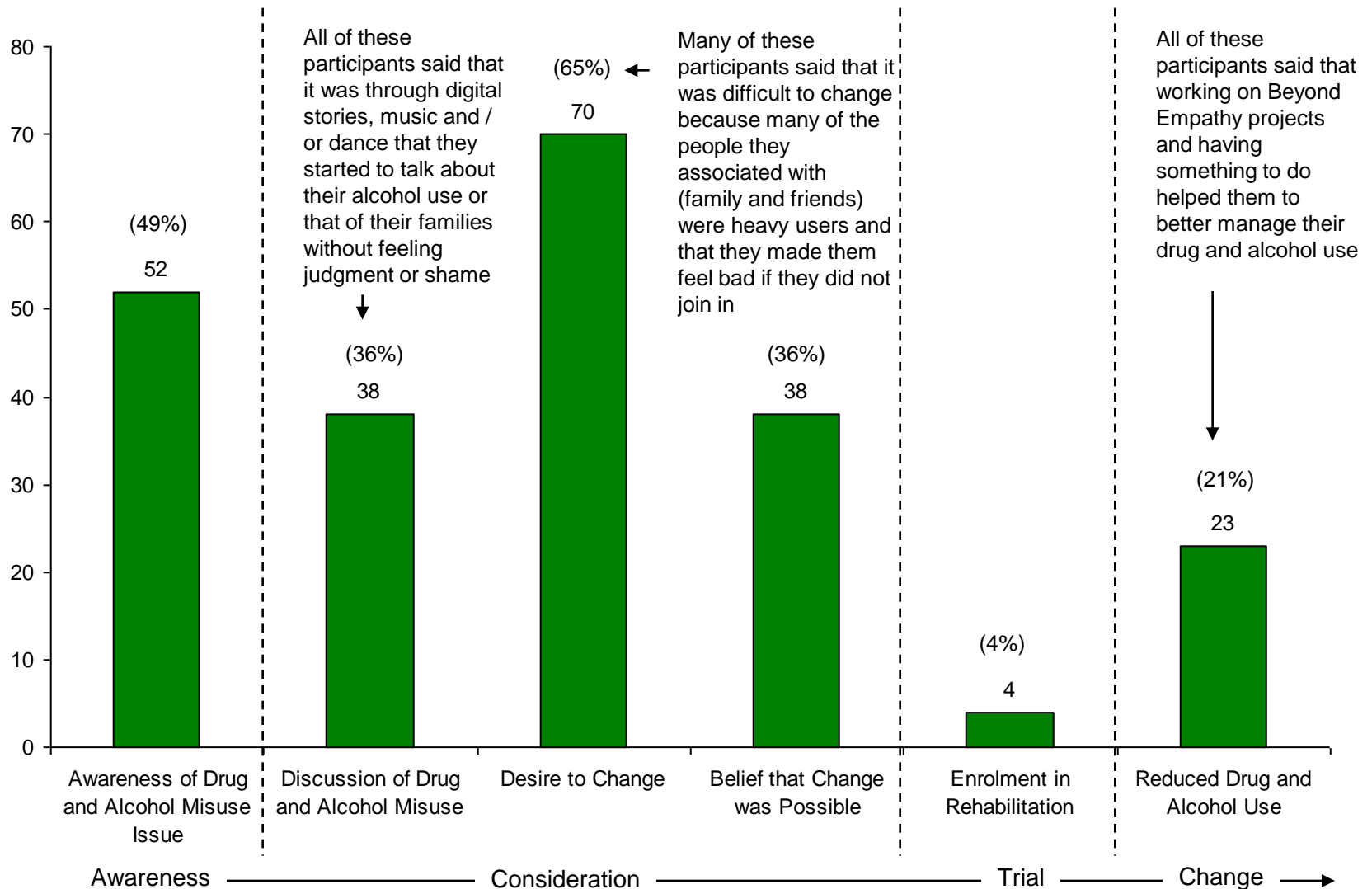
1	Pre-awareness	Believe that your AOD use is not impacting you / others in a -ve way
2	Awareness	Believe that your AOD use is impacting you / others in a -ve way
3	Consideration	Want to change your AOD use but do not know how
4		Have started to talk to people who can support you about changing your AOD use
5	Trial	Are working to change your AOD use
6		Have changed your lifestyle to try to avoid situations where you are likely to use
7		Have considered enrolling in a AOD management / rehabilitation program
8		Have enrolled in a AOD management / rehabilitation program
9	Change	Have reduced your AOD usage
10		Are managing your AOD usage safely

# ... and that they either wanted to address it or were working on doing so

# of Sample Population identifying with stages in drug and alcohol management spectrum<sup>1</sup> (% = % of sample pop.)



# The majority of those participants said that the MiaB had played an important role in helping them to get to that point



# Data is not available to assess the impact that the MiaB Program had on participating support workers

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- Participating support workers were not included in the interview based evaluation and so no comments are able to be made in relation to the impact of the Program in relation to whether they believe that the MiaB Program improved their ability to work with the participant group, their attitude to arts based intervention practice or their propensity to adopt AIP techniques

# Summary

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- Based on the quantitative and qualitative data available it appears that the MiaB Program played a positive role in helping participants to:
  - Access information relating to drug and alcohol use / misuse
  - Identify local drug and alcohol and support services
  - Feel more comfortable engaging with local support workers
  - Identify drug misuse issues and / or issues relating to family or community drug use
  - Start to talk about those issues
  - Develop and articulate a desire to change their drug and alcohol use
  - Trial changes in drug and alcohol use
  - Reduce drug and alcohol use during and in the period immediately following the completion of the MiaB Program
- Available data is not sufficient to assess:
  - Whether or not improved awareness of local support services and apparent comfort in engaging with support workers translated into an increased take up of those services
  - The scale of the change in drug and alcohol use achieved by participants claiming to have reduced or improved the management of their consumption
  - The extent to which the identified attitudinal and behavioural changes are retained over time
- In the absence of ongoing program involvement it seems likely that behavioural benefits are likely to reduce for a number of participants over time, particularly where their community and home based environments do not support the maintenance of the changes in behaviour supported through the MiaB Program
- It is recommended that consideration be given to conducting follow up interviews with the participants included in the data collection process that informed this Review in 12 months time to assess the extent to which program benefits are retained over time