



Utilisation of Sobering Up Centres, 1990 - 2005

Introduction

Sobering up centres (SUCs) are support services that provide a practical, harm reduction approach to the issue of public intoxication. They provide overnight care to persons who are intoxicated, who are not in need of hospital care and whose behaviour can be managed effectively and safely by sobering up centre staff. This is a very cost effective service, which may otherwise result in more expensive hospital based treatment for intoxication management (Table 2, page 2).

Admissions to SUCs

Annual admissions to SUCs increased 13 fold, from a total of 1,533 in 1991 (the first full year of operation) to a total of 19,380 in 2005 (Table 2, page 5; Figure 1, page 4).

Gender

From 1990 to 2005 there was a total of 196,601 admissions to SUCs, of which 134,313 (68.3%) were males, 62,249 (31.7%) were females and 39 (<0.1%) where gender was missing (Table 2, page 5).

Indigenous status

In 2005 of the 18,280 admissions to SUCs, 17,760 (97.2%) were indigenous and 520 (2.8%) were non indigenous. In non metropolitan health regions (HRs) almost all episodes involved indigenous persons, such as Goldfields and South East Coastal (99.2%), Kimberley (99.6%), Midwest and Murchison (94.1%) and Pilbara and Gascoyne (98.7%) HRs (Table 3, page 5).

There has also been a growth in the proportion of indigenous persons attending the Perth SUC, increasing from 51.4% of admissions in 1999 to 84.2% of admissions in 2004.

Regional trends

An overview of trends in annual admissions to each SUC is provided in the appendix of data tables. Out of the 19,380 admissions in the year 2005, a total of 3,219 (16.6%) were

in the metropolitan area and 16,161 (83.4%) were in non metropolitan areas of the State.

With respect to the non metropolitan regions, two SUCs - Broome and Kununurra accounted for four out of ten (42.9%) of all admissions. The next two most frequent number of admissions in 2005 were at the Derby and Port Hedland SUCs, which together accounted for a further 20.4% of non metropolitan admissions.

Age structure

There were notable differences between a number of the HRs in the age and gender structure of the populations attending SUCs, such as:

- at the Wiluna SUC most admissions were clustered in a younger age group of males in the 20 to 24 age group;
- at the Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek SUCs most admissions involved those in the 25 to 39 age group with a greater number of males than females;
- at the Broome SUC most admissions involved males in the 30 to 39 age group;
- at the Perth SUC most admissions involved the 35 to 49 age group with a much greater proportion of males than females; and
- at the Roebourne SUC most admissions involved males in the 40 to 59 age group.

Detentions in Police Lock Ups

From 1990 to 2005 there was a total of 79,875 detentions of intoxicated persons in police lock ups in the various catchment areas served by operating SUCs, of which 59,026 (73.9%) were males, 20,033 (25.1%) were females and 816 (1.0%) where gender was missing (Table 2, page 5).

The impact of SUCs on the detention of intoxicated persons is demonstrated in Figure 1 (page 4), which shows a sharp decline in detentions from 1992 up to the present.

From 1992 (the first full year of complete police data) to 2005 the number of detentions of intoxicated persons in

Written by Greg Swensen (June 2007)

police lockups declined by 84.0%, from 12,346 in 1992 to 1,972 in 2005.

Metropolitan SUCs

There are three SUCs in the Perth metropolitan area, the Perth SUC which was established in May 1990, the Midland SUC which was established in June 2002 and the Anawim SUC which was established in February 2003. *Note: The Midland SUC closed in June 2006.*

Over the period from 1990 to 2005 there was a total of 35,388 admissions to the SUCs and from 1992 to 2005 a total of 2,130 detentions in police lockups in the catchment areas served by these three SUCs.

Perth SUC

Over the period from 1990 to 2005 there was a total of 31,737 admissions, of which 25,295 (79.7%) were males, 6,440 (20.3%) were females and 2 where gender was missing. *Note: The Perth SUC was closed for a six month period for renovations from January 2004 and re-opened on 6 July 2004.*

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows the greatest number of male admissions involved the 40 to 44 year age group, whereas for females most admissions involved the 35 to 39 age group.

Midland SUC

From 2002 to 2005 there was a total of 1,980 admissions, of which 1,479 (74.7%) were males and 501 (25.3%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2002 to 2005 shows the greatest number of male admissions involved the 45 to 49 year age group, whereas for females most admissions involved the 35 to 39 age group.

Table 1
Annual expenditure on sobering up services,
1990/1991 - 2004/2005

Year	Total (\$)	Year	Total (\$)
1990/1991	318,733	1998/1999	2,968,400
1991/1992	501,413	1999/2000	2,493,225
1992/1993	763,165	2000/2001	2,370,100
1993/1994	1,086,982	2001/2002	3,476,349
1994/1995	1,863,665	2002/2003	4,000,813
1995/1996	1,722,200	2003/2004	3,517,495
1996/1997	1,863,007	2004/2005	3,547,190
1997/1998	2,016,871		

Anawin SUC

From 2003 to 2005 there was a total of 1,637 admissions, all of whom were females, as this SUC provides services to females only. A breakdown of age related data from 2003 to 2005 shows that the greatest number of admissions involved the 40 to 44 year age group with a smaller peak occurring in the 30 to 34 age group.

Other

Since 2001 there has been a limited sobering up service conducted in Scarborough as part of New Year's Eve celebrations to assist in the management of intoxicated persons.

Regional SUCs

Goldfields & South East Coastal HR

In the Goldfields and South East Coastal HR there is one SUC, the Kalgoorlie SUC which was established in June 1994.

From 1994 to 2005 there was a total of 15,311 admissions to the Kalgoorlie SUC and 9,689 detentions in police lockups in the Kalgoorlie SUC catchment area.

Of the total of 15,311 admissions, 8,848 (57.8%) were males, 6,443 (42.1%) were females and 20 (0.1%) where gender was missing.

There was an initial positive impact on the number of detentions for drunkenness in the HR's catchment area. The number of annual detentions dropped from 729 in 1994 to 546 in 1995, doubled to 1,127 detentions in 1998 and have since dropped by 68.5% to 355 in 2005.

The annual number of admissions to the only SUC in this HR increased by 76.4%, from 931 in 1994 to 1,960 in 2001 and gradually declined by 50.5% to 970 admissions in 2005.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows that most male admissions were in the 35 to 44 age group, whereas female admissions mostly involved the 30 to 44 age group.

Midwest & Murchison HR

In the Midwest and Murchison HR there are two SUCs, the Wiluna SUC (established in April 1996) and the Geraldton SUC (established in December 2003).

From 1996 to 2005 there was a total of 12,554 admissions to SUCs and 9,263 detentions in police lockups in the SUC catchment area in this HR.

Wiluna SUC

From 1996 to 2005 there was a total of 10,831 admissions to the Wiluna SUC, of which 6,510 (60.1%) were males and 4,321 (39.9%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows that male admissions mostly involved the 15 to 29 age group, with the greatest number of admissions occurring in the 20 to 24 age group, with very few admissions occurring in the 60 years and older age group.

Female admissions were most frequent in the 20 to 29 age group and then declined with age, with fewer admissions occurring in the older age groups.

Geraldton SUC

From 2003 to 2005 there was a total of 1,723 admissions to the Geraldton SUC, of which 1,250 (72.6%) were males and 473 (27.4%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2003 to 2005 shows that male admissions were most frequent in the 35 to 49 age group, whereas the greatest number of female admissions involved the 55 to 59 age group, with a smaller peak in female admissions in the 30 to 39 age group.

Pilbara & Gascoyne HR

There are two SUCs in the Pilbara and Gascoyne HR, the Hedland SUC (established in April 1991) and the Roebourne SUC (established in February 1993).

From 1991 to 2005 there was a total of 38,379 admissions to SUCs and 12,144 detentions in police lockups in this HR.

The annual number of detentions dropped from 2,128 detentions in 1992 (the first full year) to 1,232 in 1994, then increased to 1,933 in 1996. Since 1996 detentions in this region have steadily declined to 176 in 2005.

Overall, the number of admissions to SUCs increased by 197%, from 1,331 in 1992 (the first full year) to 3,947 in 2000 and then has fallen somewhat to 2,841 in 2005.

Hedland SUC

From 1991 to 2005 there was a total of 21,093 admissions, of which 13,421 (63.6%) were males, 7,667 (36.4%) were females and 5 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows a pattern of both male and female admissions peaking in the 25 to 34 age group, with the number of admissions slowly declining with age.

There was a spike in the number of male admissions in the 60 to 64 age group, whereas there were very few

admissions involving females in the 50 years and older age group.

Roebourne SUC

From 1993 to 2005 there was a total of 17,286 admissions, of which 10,856 (62.8%) were males, 6,428 (37.2%) were females and 2 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1993 to 2005 shows that male admissions were mostly clustered in the 35 to 59 age group, whereas female admissions were clustered in the 44 to 64 age group.

Kimberley HR

In the Kimberley HR there are six SUCs, the Halls Creek SUC (established in September 1992), the Fitzroy Crossing SUC (established in March 1994), the Kununurra SUC (established in September 1996), the Derby SUC (established in May 1998), the Broome SUC (established in February 1999) and the Wyndham SUC (established in December 2002).

From 1992 to 2005 there was a total of 94,969 admissions to the SUCs and 45,579 detentions in police lockups in this HR.

There has been a marked positive impact on the number of detentions for drunkenness in this region, which have steadily dropped from 8,798 in 1992 to 820 in 2005.

The decline in detentions for drunkenness has been accompanied by the steady increase in admissions to SUCs, which grew from 754 in 1992 to 11,022 in 2005, a 15 fold increase in admissions to SUCs.

Halls Creek SUC

From 1992 to 2005 there was a total of 24,410 admissions, of which 17,215 (70.5%) were males, 7,194 (29.5%) were females and 1 case where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1992 to 2005 shows that both male and female admissions were mostly clustered in the 20 to 49 year age group and there was a great number of male than female admissions in older age groups.

Fitzroy Crossing SUC

From 1994 to 2005 there was a total of 8,537 admissions, of which 5,529 (64.8%) were males, 3,002 (35.2%) were females and 6 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1994 to 2005 shows there was a similar age distribution for both male and female admissions, with most admissions involving the 25 to 44 year age group for both sexes.

Kununurra SUC

From 1996 to 2005 there was a total of 17,283 admissions, of which 13,264 (76.8%) were males, 4,017 (23.2%) were females and 2 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1996 to 2005 indicates male admissions involved those aged from 30 to 59, with very few admissions in the 60 year and older age group. Female admissions were mostly clustered in the 30 to 44 year age group, with few admissions of those aged 60 years and over.

Derby SUC

From 1998 to 2005 there was a total of 15,063 admissions, of which 10,703 (71.1%) were males, 4,359 (28.9%) were females and 1 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows that female admissions were mostly clustered in the 25 to 44 age group and then declined with very few admissions in the older age groups. Most male admissions occurred in the 25 to 49 age group and then fell sharply, with relatively few admissions in older age groups.

Broome SUC

From 1999 to 2005 there was a total of 25,873 admissions, of which 17,171 (66.4%) were males and 8,702 (33.6%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2005 shows that overall, males were older than females with male admissions peaking in the 30 to 39 age group, whereas female admissions peaked in the 30 to 39 age group. There were very few female admissions involving those aged 55 years and older.

Wyndham SUC

From 2002 to 2005 there was a total of 3,803 admissions, of which 2,751 (72.3%) were males and 1,052 (27.7%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2002 to 2005 shows a distinct peak in male admissions in the 35 to 39 age group with a smaller peak in the 45 to 49 age group.

The greatest number of female admissions occurred in the 35 to 39 age group, with relatively few admissions involving those aged 45 years and older compared to male admissions.

Figure 1
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, 1990 - 2005

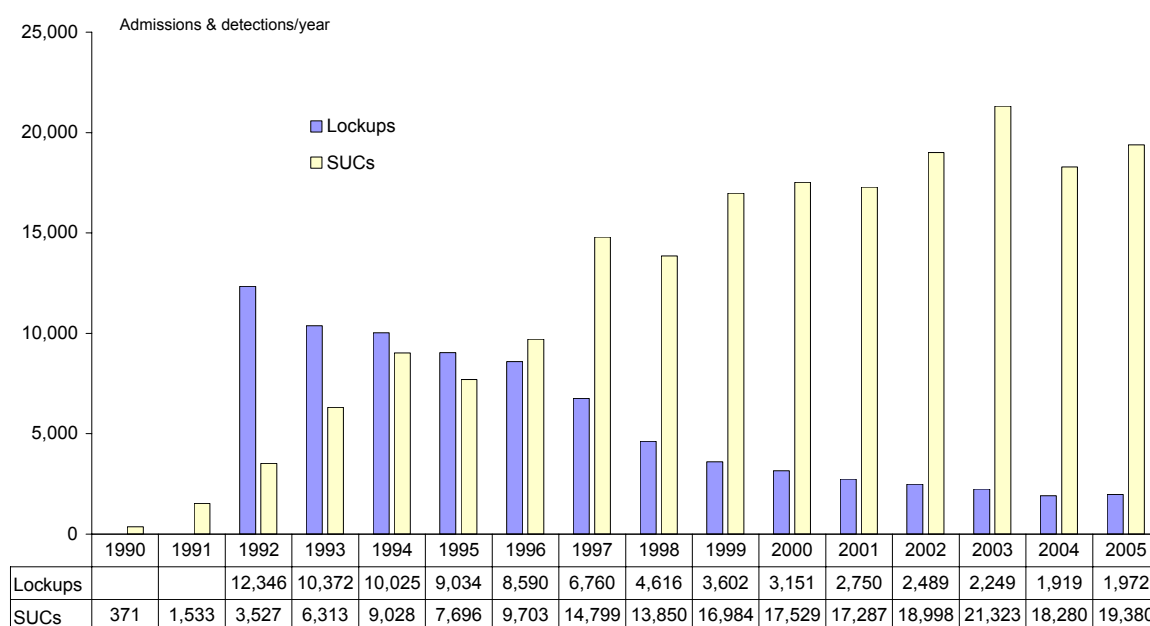


Table 2
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups by gender, 1990 - 2005

	Sobering up centres				Police lockups			
	Males	Females	Unknown	Total	Males	Females	Unknown	Total
1990	315	56	-	371	-	-	-	-
1991	1,286	247	-	1,533	-	-	-	-
1992	2,621	906	-	3,527	9,000	3,346	-	12,346
1993	4,724	1,589	-	6,313	7,789	2,583	-	10,372
1994	6,500	2,527	1	9,028	7,266	2,759	-	10,025
1995	5,616	2,071	9	7,696	6,470	2,458	106	9,034
1996	6,641	3,057	5	9,703	6,356	2,006	228	8,590
1997	10,022	4,764	13	14,799	5,035	1,578	147	6,760
1998	9,512	4,338	-	13,850	3,538	966	112	4,616
1999	11,223	5,760	1	16,984	2,764	771	67	3,602
2000	11,432	6,096	1	17,529	2,443	667	41	3,151
2001	11,326	5,960	1	17,287	2,060	652	38	2,750
2002	11,972	7,023	3	18,998	1,821	641	27	2,489
2003	13,792	7,531	-	21,323	1,654	581	14	2,249
2004	14,631	3,648	1	18,280	1,389	515	15	1,919
2005	12,700	6,676	4	19,380	1,441	510	21	1,972
Total	134,313	62,249	39	196,601	59,026	20,033	816	79,875

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Data Tables & Figures

Table A-1
Annual admissions to sobering up centres, WA, 1990 - 1997

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Metro								
Perth	371	1,108	1,442	1,516	1,784	1,649	1,712	2,776
Midland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anawim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	371	1,108	1,442	1,516	1,784	1,649	1,712	2,776
Midwest & Murchison								
Wiluna	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,451	2,493
Geraldton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,451	2,493
Goldfields & SE Coastal								
Kalgoorlie	-	-	-	-	931	1,258	1,094	1,151
Sub total	-	-	-	-	931	1,258	1,094	1,151
Kimberley								
Halls Creek	-	-	754	2,105	2,248	1,971	1,873	2,432
Fitzroy Crossing	-	-	-	-	1,225	556	412	856
Kununurra	-	-	-	-	-	-	517	2,356
Broome	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wyndham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	754	2,105	3,473	2,527	2,802	5,644
Pilbara & Gascoyne								
Hedland	-	425	1,331	2,237	2,053	1,402	1,251	1,180
Roebourne	-	-	-	455	787	860	1,393	1,555
Sub total	-	425	1,331	2,692	2,840	2,262	2,644	2,735
Total State	371	1,533	3,527	6,313	9,028	7,696	9,703	14,799

Table A-2
Annual admissions to sobering up centres, WA, 1998 - 2005

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Metro								
Perth	2,881	2,775	2,548	2,455	2,910	2,587	892	2331
Midland	-	-	-	-	168	557	894	361
Anawim	-	-	-	-	-	523	588	526
Other	-	-	-	12	16	3	2	1
Sub total	2,881	2,775	2,548	2,467	3,094	3,670	2,376	3,219
Midwest & Murchison								
Wiluna	1,198	692	904	1,072	1,400	928	298	395
Geraldton	-	-	-	-	-	23	767	933
Sub total	1,198	692	904	1,072	1,400	951	1,065	1,328
Goldfields & SE Coastal								
Kalgoorlie	1,642	1,567	1,409	1,960	1,183	1,127	1,019	970
Sub total	1,642	1,567	1,409	1,960	1,183	1,127	1,019	970
Kimberley								
Halls Creek	1,927	1,614	1,536	1,801	1,459	1,913	1,560	1,217
Fitzroy Crossing	736	973	645	752	810	640	695	237
Kununurra	1,421	1,564	1,669	1,121	1,366	2,088	2,096	3,085
Broome	-	2,477	3,086	2,965	4,511	4,951	4,030	3,853
Derby	1,006	2,141	1,785	2,047	2,229	2,348	1,748	1,759
Wyndham	-	-	-	-	138	1,531	1,263	871
Sub total	5,090	8,769	8,721	8,686	10,513	13,471	11,392	11,022
Pilbara & Gascoyne								
Hedland	1,566	1,466	1,902	1,447	1,209	899	1,184	1,541
Roebourne	1,473	1,715	2,045	1,655	1,599	1,205	1,244	1,300
Sub total	3,039	3,181	3,947	3,102	2,808	2,104	2,428	2,841
Total State	13,850	16,984	17,529	17,287	18,998	21,319	18,280	19,380

Figure A-1
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Metropolitan Health Region, 1990 - 2005

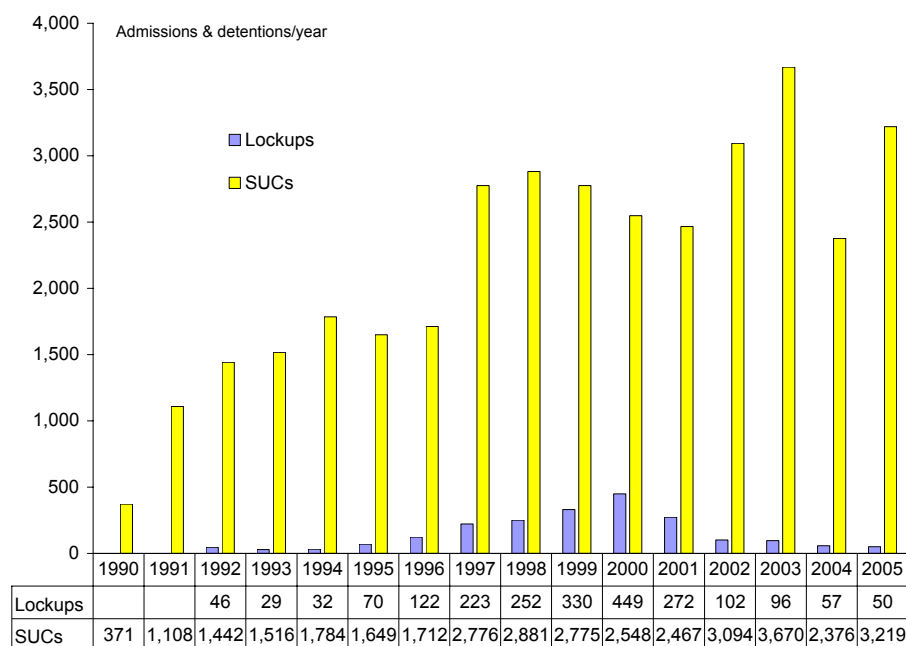


Figure A-2
Admissions to Perth sobering up centre by age group, 1998 - 2005

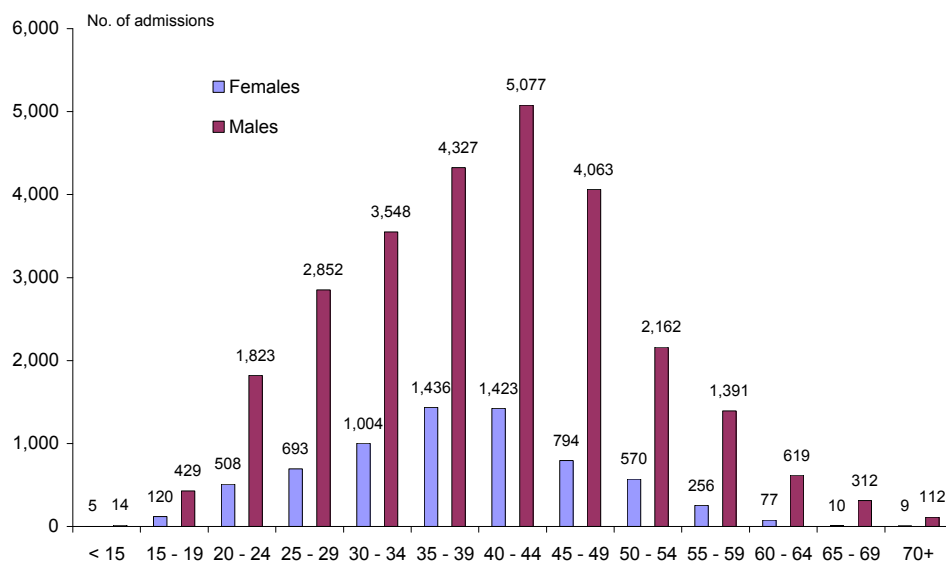


Figure A-3
Admissions to Midland sobering up centre by age group, 2002 - 2005

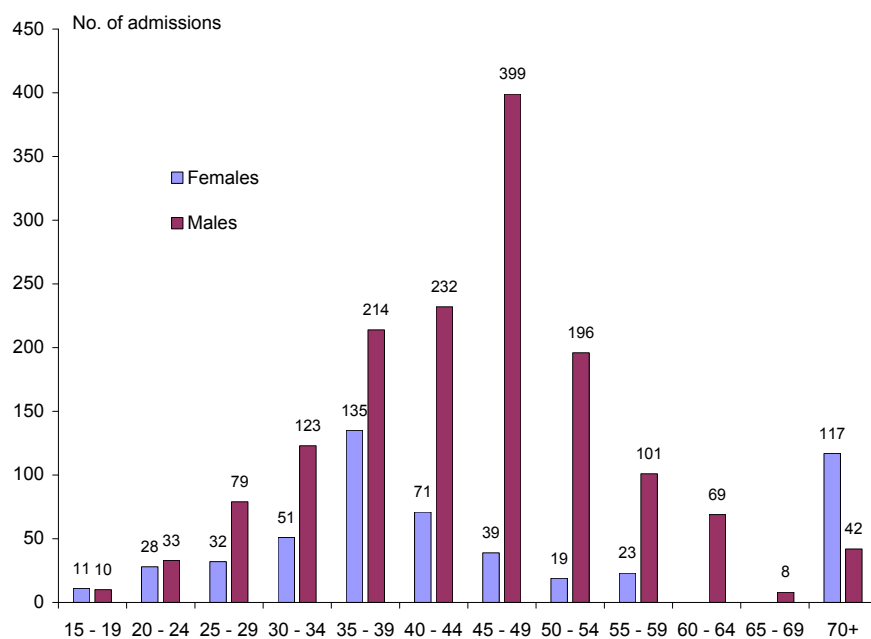


Figure A-4
Admissions to Anawim sobering up centre by age group, 2003 - 2005

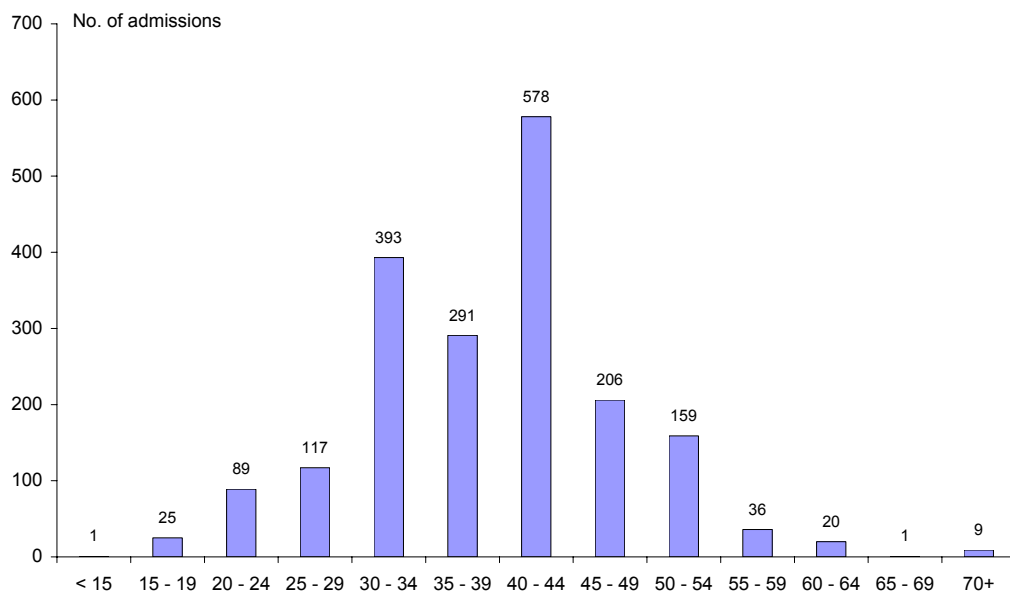


Figure A-5
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Goldfields & South East Coastal Health Region 1992 - 2005

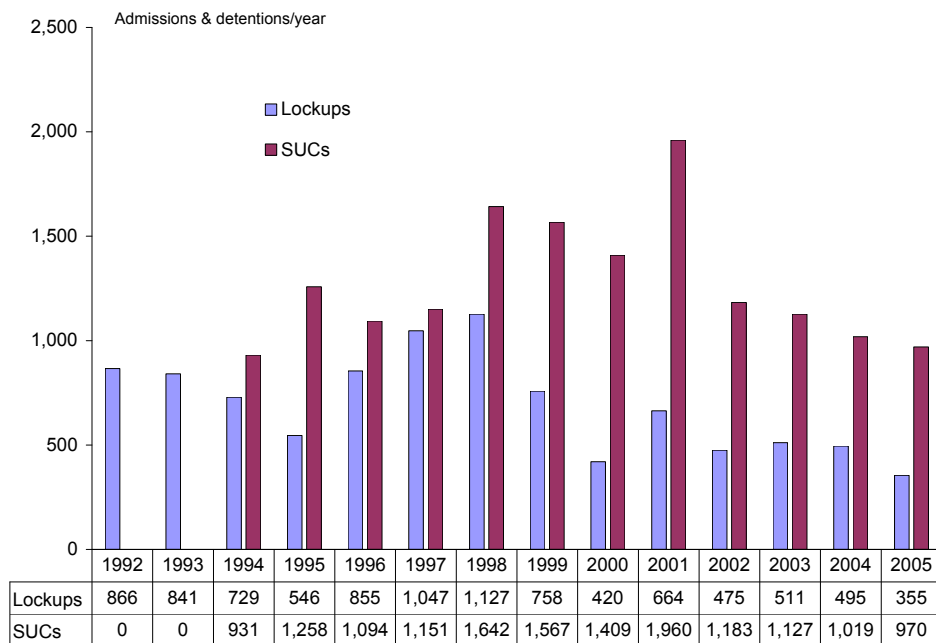


Figure A-6
Admissions to Kalgoorlie sobering up centre by age group, 1998 - 2005

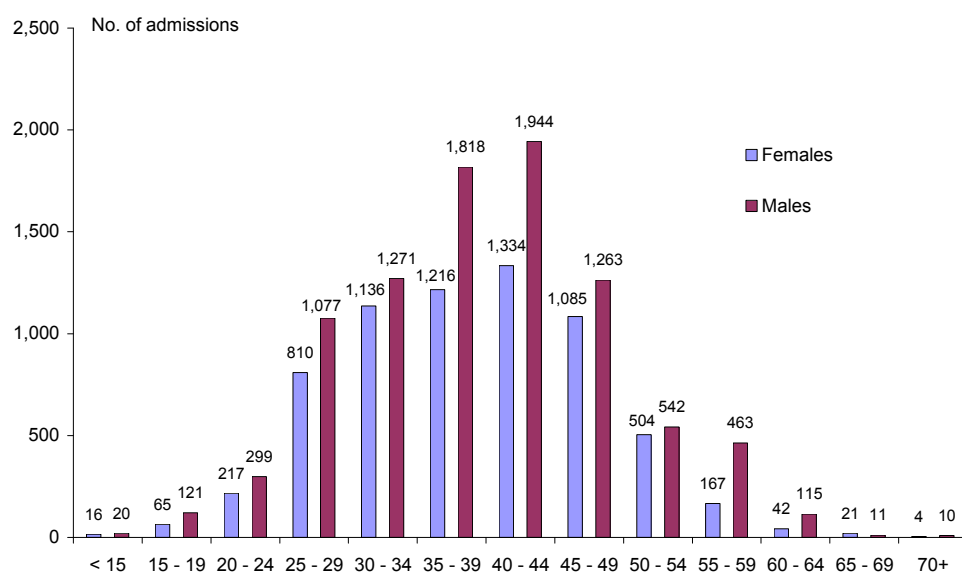


Figure A-7
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Midwest & Murchison Health Region, 1992 - 2005

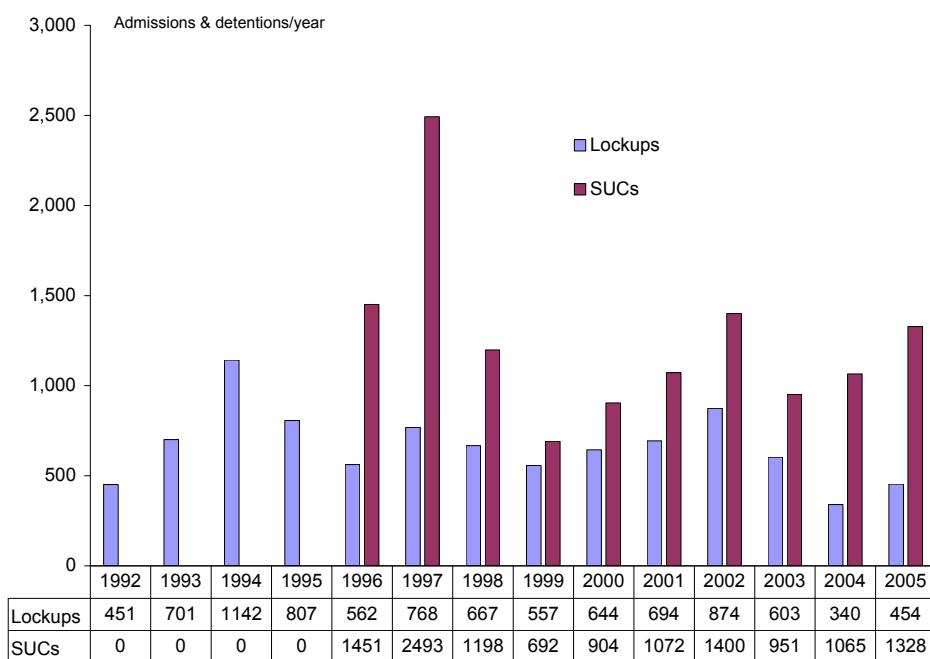


Figure A-8
Admissions to Wiluna sobering up centre by age group, 1996 - 2005

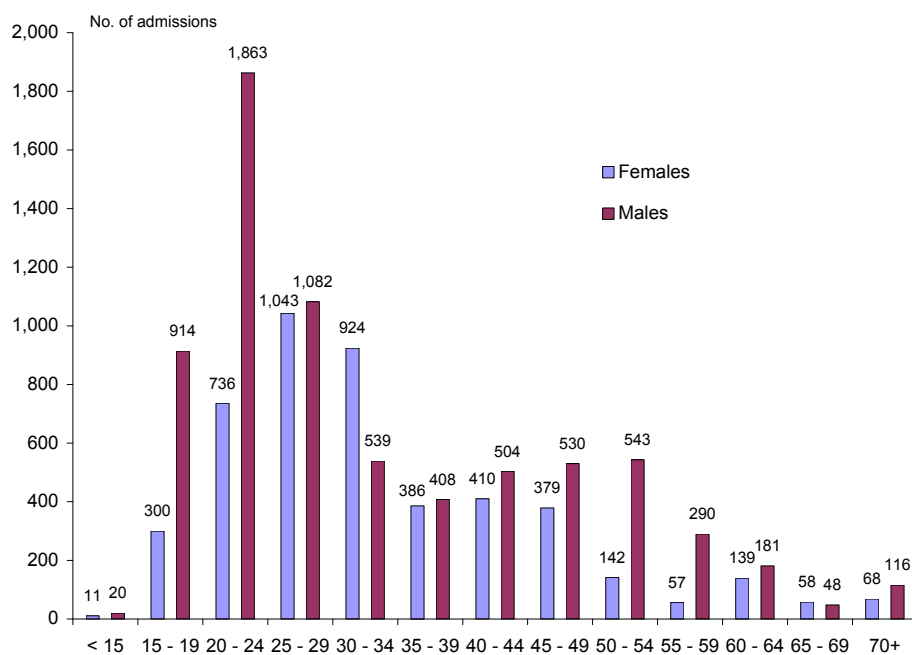


Figure A-9
Admissions to Geraldton sobering up centre by age group, 2003 - 2005

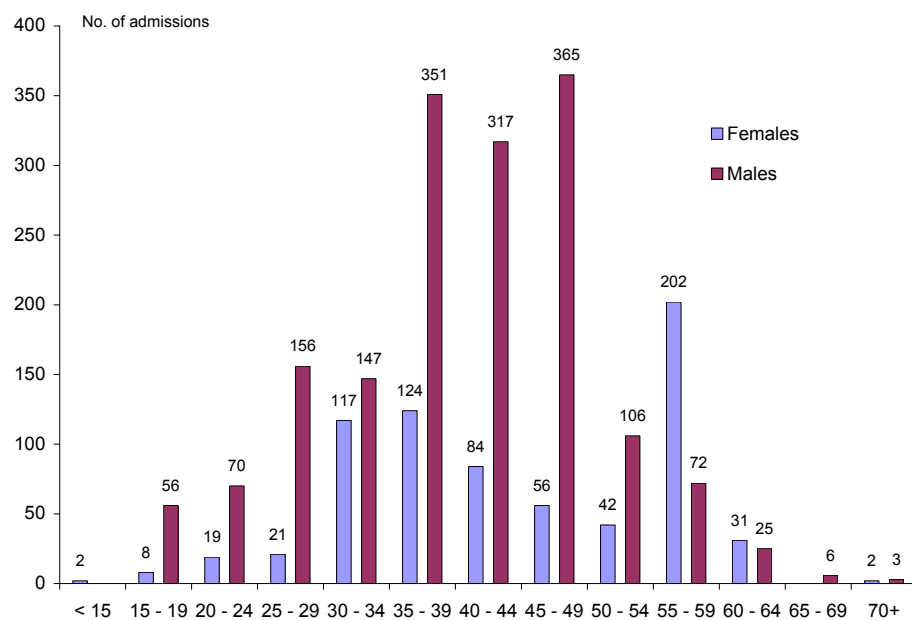


Figure A-10

Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Pilbara & Gascoyne Health Region, 1991 - 2005

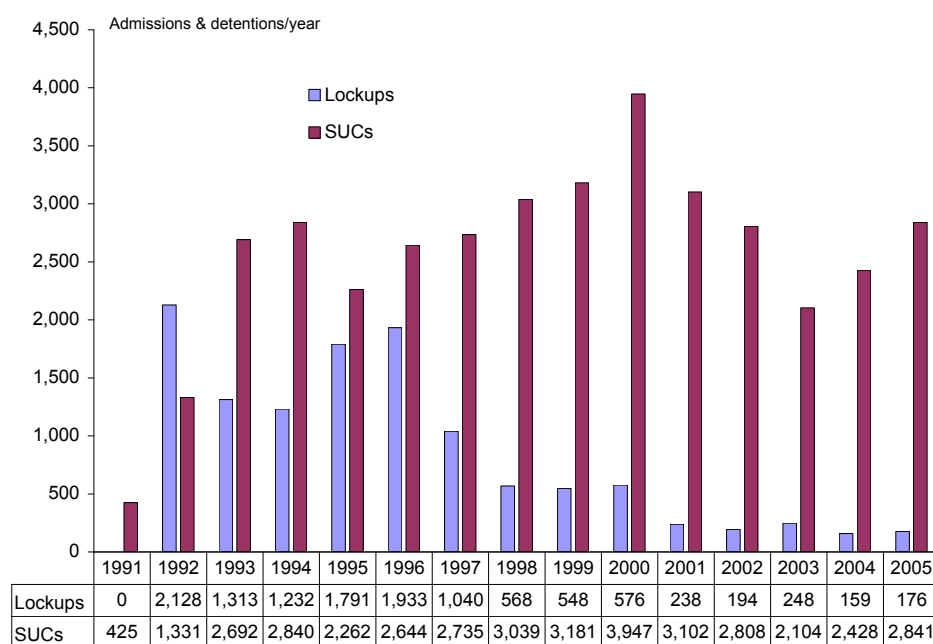


Figure A-11

Admissions to Hedland sobering up centre by age group, 1991 - 2005

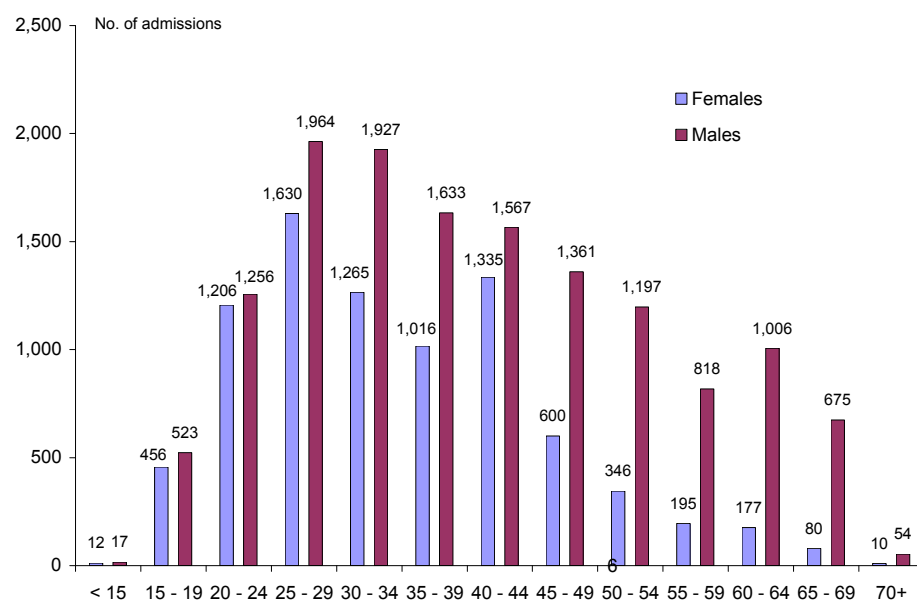


Figure A-12
Admissions to Roebourne sobering up centre by age group, 1993 - 2005

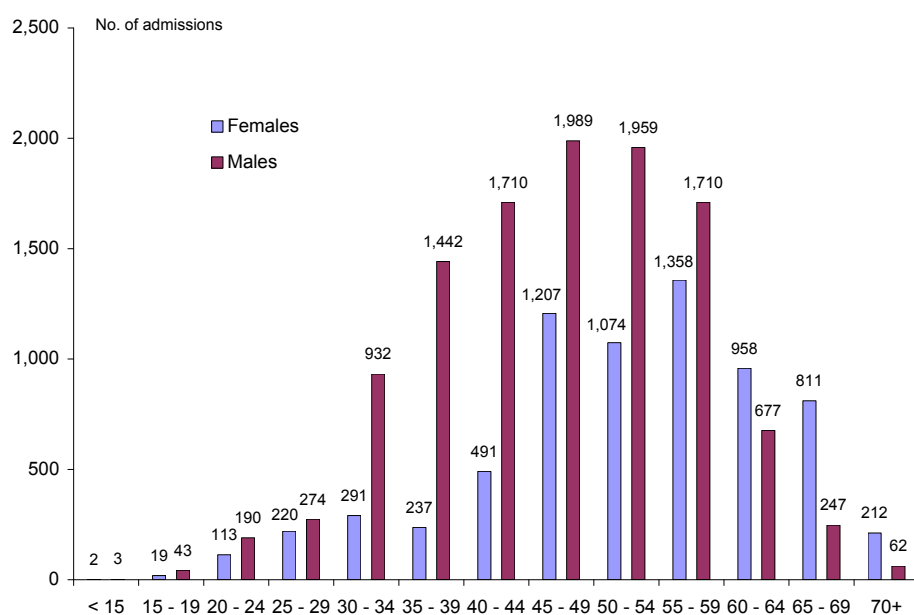


Figure A-13
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Kimberley Health Region, 1992 - 2005

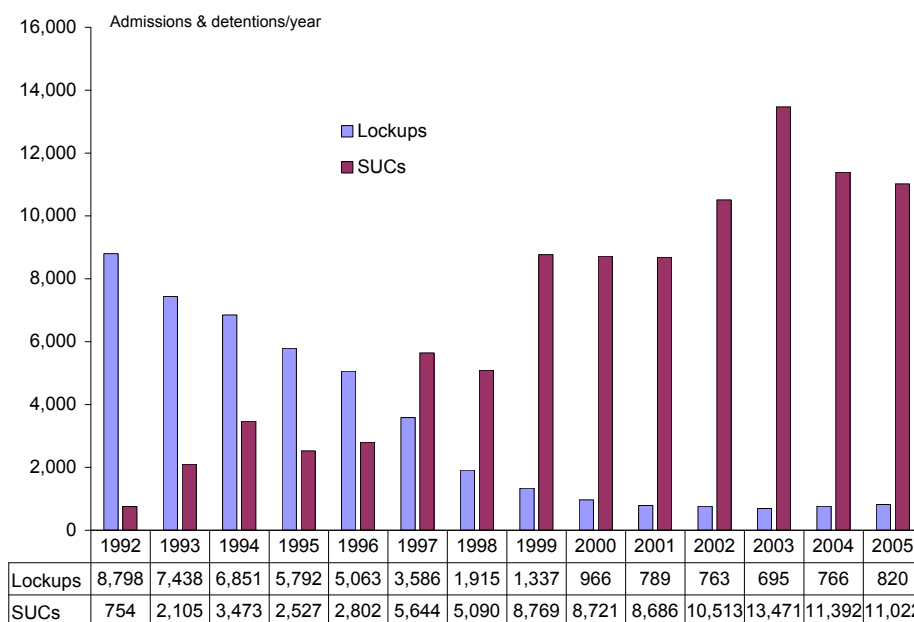


Figure A-14
Admissions to Halls Creek sobering up centre by age group, 1992 - 2005

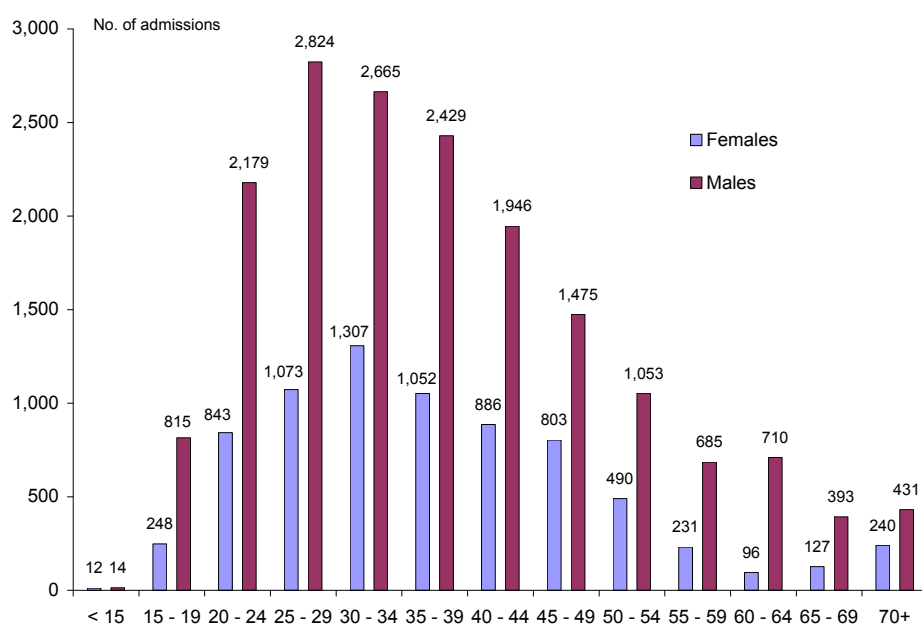


Figure A-15
Admissions to Fitzroy Crossing sobering up centre by age group, 1994 - 2005

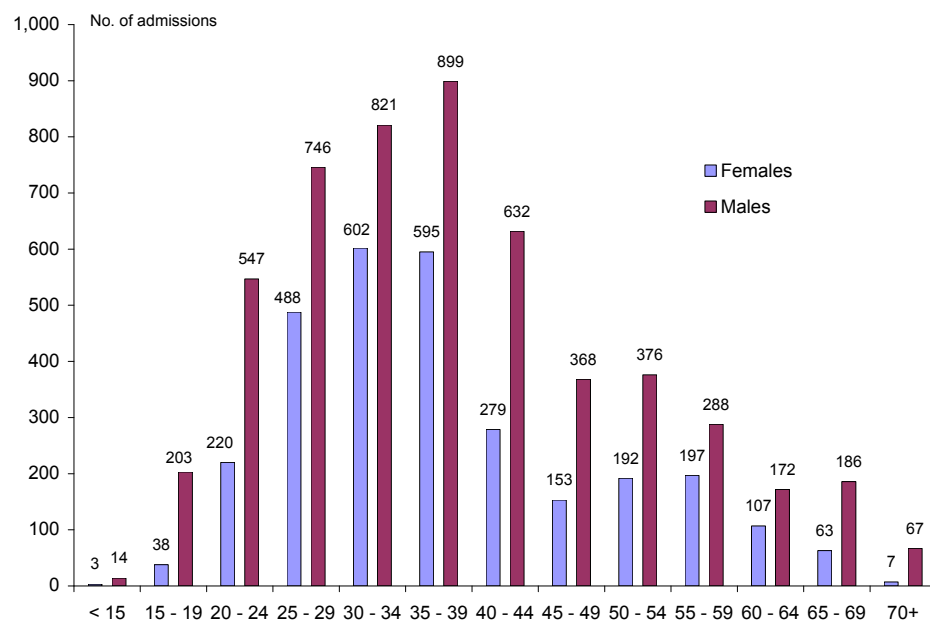


Figure A-16
Admissions to Kununurra sobering up centre by age group, 1996 - 2005

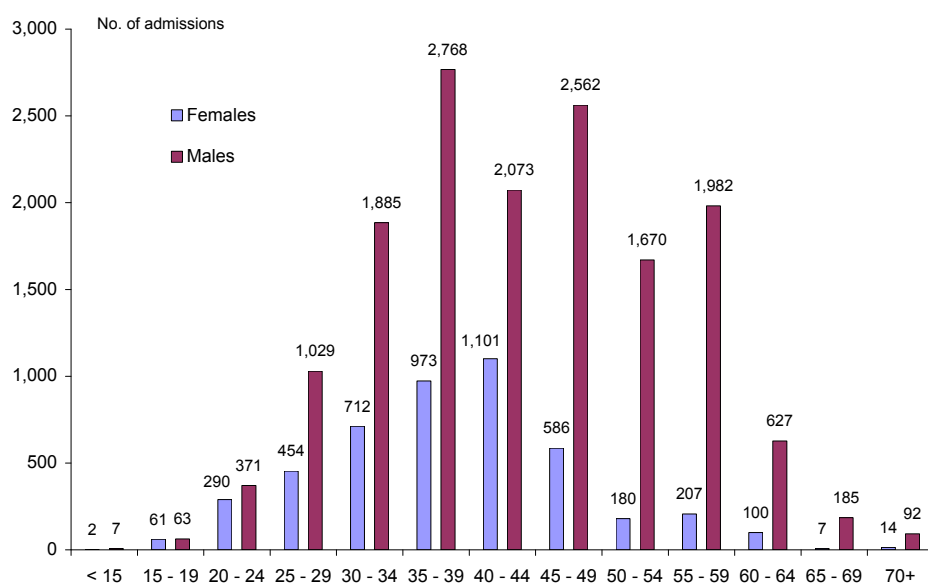


Figure A-17
Admissions to Derby sobering up centre by age group, 1998 - 2005

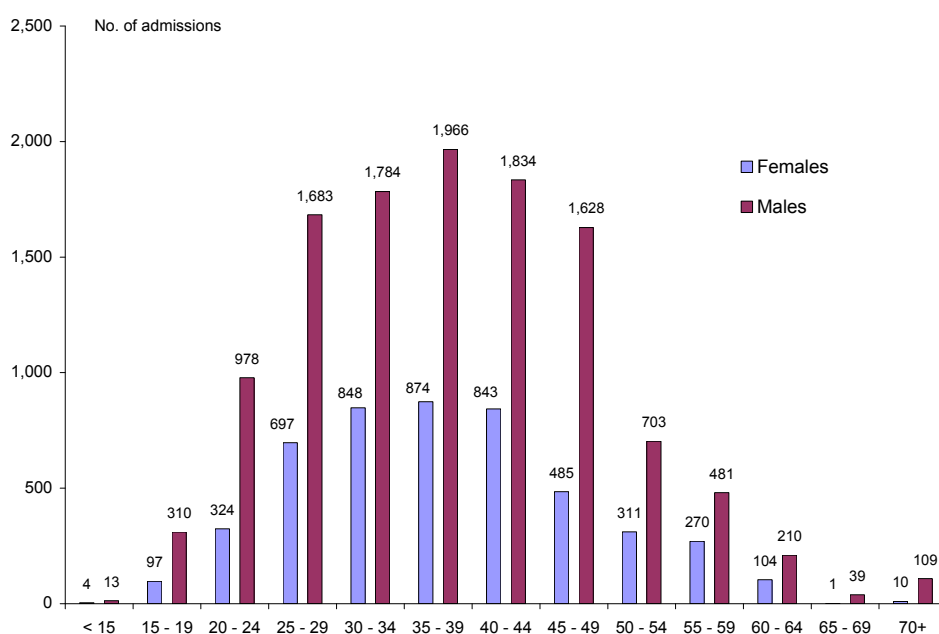


Figure A-18
Admissions to Broome sobering up centre by age group, 1999 - 2005

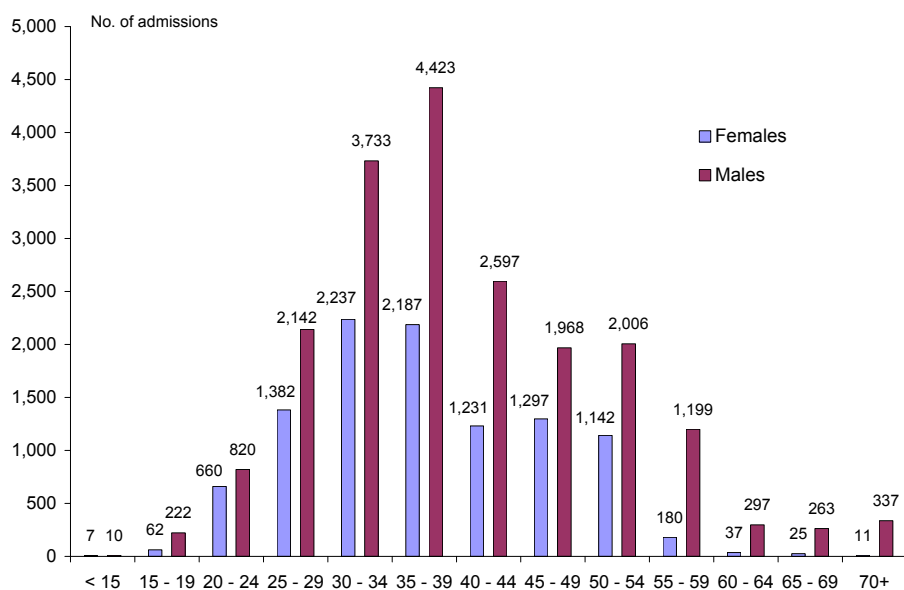
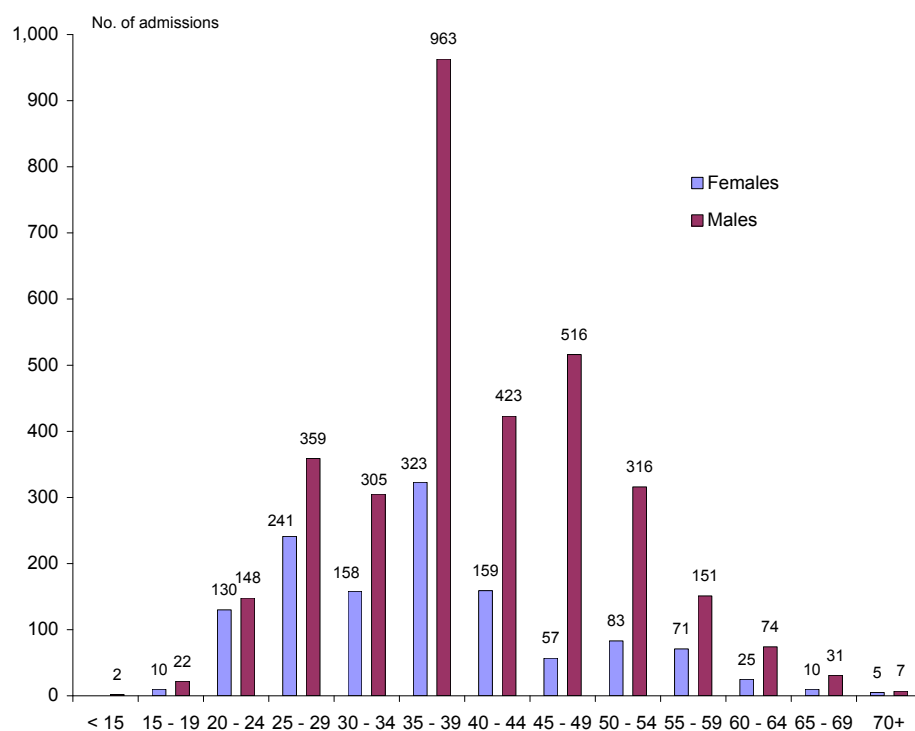


Figure A-19
Admissions to Wyndham sobering up centre by age group, 2002 - 2005



Background

The *Detention of Drunken Persons Act 1989* was enacted on 27 April 1990 and decriminalised public drunkenness in Western Australia (WA). The impetus for the decriminalisation of public drunkenness and the establishment of sobering up centres (SUCs) arose from recommendations contained in the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The management, development and funding of SUCs presently rests with the Drug and Alcohol Office. *(Initial responsibility for establishing SUCs was with the WA Alcohol and Drug Authority, now known as the Drug and Alcohol Office. Responsibility was transferred to the Health Department of WA in July 1997, shifted to the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office in July 1998 and then assigned to the Drug and Alcohol Office in December 2001.)*

Sobering up services generally operate five nights per week, apart from the Perth SUC, which operates seven nights per week. These services involve the provision of a substantial meal, clean bedding and sleepwear and laundering of clothes. The short stay aims to break the negative cycle of alcohol induced harm by providing care to intoxicated persons most at risk to themselves, their families and their community.

The expansion of SUCs throughout WA provides a more appropriate option to manage public intoxication. The positive impact of SUCs on the management of intoxicated persons rather than being detained in police lockups has been demonstrated at the regional level as well as for the whole state. The gains from the expansion in SUCs include:

- reductions in police time and resources previously involved in detaining and monitoring intoxicated people in lock ups;
- reduced use of court time and resources;
- reduced levels of domestic violence and other problems associated with alcohol abuse; and
- reduced burden on hospitals because of fewer hospitalisations for alcohol related illnesses and accidents.

Experience has shown that over a period of time the opening of a SUC usually encourages the community to develop additional services to address alcohol related problems. These include outreach programs, community patrols, homeless support programs, alcohol and other drug education programs and community support for initiatives to restrict alcohol availability.

Development & expansion

The first SUC was opened in the Perth inner metropolitan area in 1990. Since then SUCs have opened progressively in identified high priority localities throughout the State, as follows:

- Perth (May 1990);
- Port Hedland (April 1991);
- Halls Creek (September 1992);
- Roebourne (February 1993);
- Fitzroy Crossing (March 1994);
- Kalgoorlie (June 1994);
- Wiluna (April 1996);
- Kununurra (September 1996);
- Derby (May 1998);
- Broome (February 1999);
- Midland (June 2002);
- Wyndham (December 2002);
- Anawim (February 2003); and
- Geraldton (December 2003).

This publication updates the data on the utilisation of sobering up centres previously published in:

- *Statistical Bulletin No. 5* (June 1999);
- *Statistical Bulletin No. 11* (April 2001); and
- *Statistical Bulletin No. 20* (June 2004).

Cost effectiveness

The annual cost of sobering up services has gradually increased as the number of SUCs has expanded from, \$318,733 in 1990/1991 to \$3,547,190 million in 2004/2005.

This data shows that SUCs are a very cost effective service as they avoid costs that would otherwise be incurred if people had been detained or admitted to a hospital.

In the year 2005 there were 14 SUCs which had a total cost of \$3,547,190, which represents an annual average cost of \$253,370 per centre and an average of \$183 per admission (using the 2004/2005 financial year data).

This publication is available online at
<http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au>