

## **TOP ONLINE – Proof of concept for a web-based Traffic Offender Intervention Program in New South Wales, Australia**

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### **Abstract**

TOP ONLINE is a web-based traffic offender intervention developed for desktop, tablet and smartphone applications. This work has been motivated by two aims: first, the need to better target traffic offender rehabilitation measures to engage offenders; and, second to address inefficiencies in program delivery and the operation of the Local Court-based Traffic Offender Intervention Program in NSW. TOP ONLINE overcomes some of the obstacles to high fidelity program implementation, specifically concerning content, accessibility, and self-paced learning. This paper details the successful development and pilot testing of the TOP ONLINE: Drugs & Alcohol Unit as proof-of-concept.

### **Background**

The NSW Traffic Offender Intervention Program is a major intervention for drivers (Faulks, Siskind & Sheehan, 2018), offered in face-to-face classes only. TOP ONLINE has been developed for augment the extend the Program, in desktop, tablet and smartphone applications. This work has been motivated by two aims: first, the need to better target traffic offender rehabilitation measures to engage offenders; and, second to address inefficiencies in program delivery and the operation of the Local Court-based Traffic Offender Intervention Program in NSW. TOP ONLINE overcomes some of the obstacles to high fidelity program implementation, specifically concerning content, accessibility, and self-paced learning. This paper details the development and pilot testing of the TOP ONLINE: Drugs & Alcohol Unit as proof-of-concept.

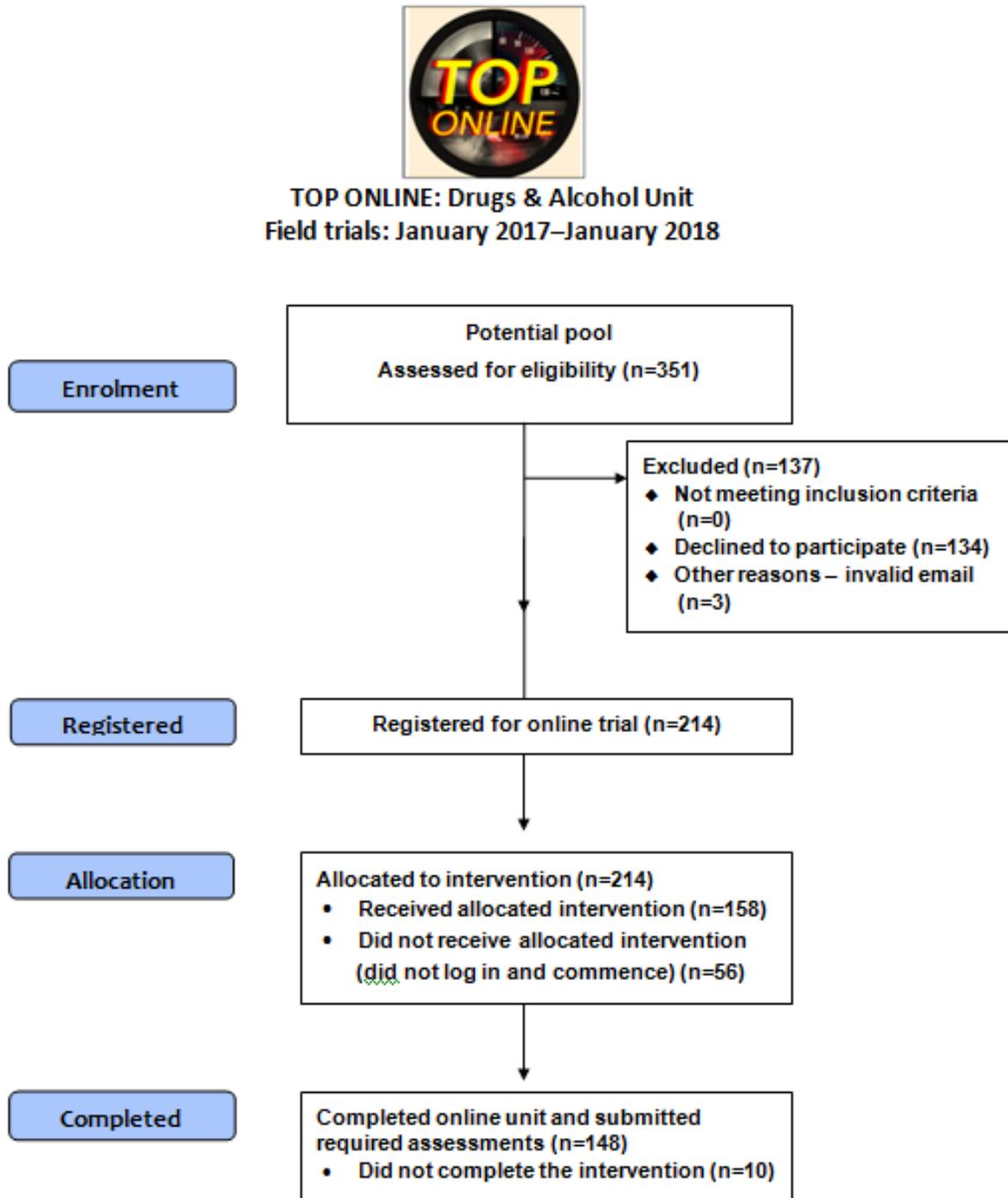
### **Description**

The unit has five components. First, traffic offenders view an introductory video lecture that describes the learning platform and key features, and then complete a computer-based alcohol use screening survey – the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) Australia. The second and third components consist of a series of short video lectures on drugs other than alcohol, and on alcohol, respectively. A series of assessment questions must be completed during these video lectures. The fourth and fifth components are optional home study extensions to the unit, comprising an interview with a local community-based drug and alcohol counsellor, and several additional public education resources which offenders may access.

Pilot testing of the TOP ONLINE: Drugs & Alcohol Unit was conducted over January 2017-January 2018. Offenders registered in-class in the week preceding the scheduled drugs and alcohol presentation, and were asked to complete the online unit prior to the face-to-face class. Otherwise, they had to attend that class as scheduled.

A total pool of 351 offenders were offered the online program, 217 (62%) registered to participate, and 158 (45%) actually commenced the program (see Figure 1). For those offenders who logged in

and started, the trial was highly successful: almost all (94%) offenders completed (and those who did not complete attended a face-to-face session subsequently).



*Figure 1. Flow chart for proof-of-concept field testing of the TOP ONLINE Drugs & Alcohol Unit, January 2017 to January 2018*

Reasons for not accessing the online unit were practical: work, family or social activities intervened or there were problems with accessing the internet. The availability of the face-to-face class as scheduled also influenced the offenders’ decision to access the online unit.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The development and implementation of the TOP ONLINE: Drugs & Alcohol Unit has demonstrated that web-based learning can be integrated into a broader traffic offender intervention program successfully (see also Wilson, 2015, for a demonstration of a stand-alone drink driving intervention). While TOP ONLINE provides an innovative new platform for the delivery of drug and alcohol education, it does not suit all offenders, and there can be intervening reasons why even those offenders who express an interest do not access the resource. Online learning can be a feasible option for traffic offender interventions, but must be offered in the context of blended learning opportunities integrating face-to-face, group discussion, home study and online learning. Further studies are required to assess how effective online learning may be in the traffic offender intervention environment.

## **References**

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