

# Herald Sun

National-old-do not use

## Addicts, fearful friends seek guidance after Ben Cousins documentary

- by: *Elissa Doherty*
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**BEN Cousins' shocking tell-all documentary on substance abuse has sparked a flood of calls for help to drug centres.**

The Australian Drug Foundation said hundreds of addicts and concerned friends and family had come forward since the controversial two-part show aired last week.

In Victoria, the DirectLine helpline promoted on the *Such Is Life* documentary took about 250 calls on both nights it was broadcast.

The ADF website was also swamped, with cyber traffic up by more than 400 per cent on the previous month.

The ratings winner revealed how Cousins would binge on cocaine for days and showed graphic footage of him smoking and snorting drugs.

Prof Dan Lubman, director of Turning Point, which runs DirectLine, said many people didn't realise they had a problem until seeing the show.



Drug hell ... a scenes from the Ben Cousins documentary. Pictures: Channel Seven  
Source: The Daily Telegraph

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"There were people who knew they were pushing their use but it wasn't until the show that they thought maybe they had a problem," Prof Lubman said.

"There was genuine interest from the people who called in, in getting further help and support.

"For us it needs to be an ongoing project, the awareness needs to remain when people forget about Ben Cousins' story.

"This is something families and the community are struggling with on a daily basis."

Prof Lubman said the surge of callers continued at the weekend, and included drug users from young adults to the middle-aged.

While the documentary had been criticised for glamorising drug use, Prof Lubman explained it was important that the issues were raised.

ADF chief John Rogerson said calls had peaked just after the documentary.

"We were really hoping the Ben Cousins story would stop Australians from judging people who use drugs so harshly, because we know that shift in attitude can help with their recovery and rehabilitation. The documentary has helped kick-start this journey," he said.

"We were also hoping this program would help people understand they're not alone, that there is support available for people with a drug problem, their families and friends.

"It's pleasing to see the rise in calls around the nation and the spike in visits to our website."

**DirectLine is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 888 236**

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