

Older but not forgotten?

VAADA held its forum ‘Older but not forgotten?’ on Tuesday 21 June 2004 at the William Angliss Conference Centre as part of Drug Action Week®. The forum, explored the issue of older people (45+) and drug use.

The forum was opened by VAADA Executive Officer Janine Bush, who noted in her opening, that although the issue of older people isn’t currently high profile issue for drug workers, it was an issue that needs consideration by the AOD sector and the community.

The morning session included a diverse series of keynote speaker which included:

- Chrysanthe Psychogios, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
- Priscilla Dowling, AIHW
- Paul McDonald, Department of Human Services
- Bill Stronach, Australian Drug Foundation
- David Crosbie, Odyssey House Victoria
- Felicity Grosse, Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre

It was noted in the morning session that the proportion of Australians aged 50+ was 29% (5.7m) of the population in 2002 and is expected to rise to 46%–50% (11.5–14.3m) in 2051.

Other points made by keynote speakers were:

- The need for services to be relevant to older clients
- The need to for AOD services to partner with agencies with aged care expertise
- The need for some AOD agencies to develop a special interest for this client group (not all agencies)
- The need to stop dismissing physical and emotional problems amongst older people as simply old age
- The need for increased research

- The need to consult with older people directly
- That the situation for older people living in rural regional settings will be exacerbated by isolation and lack of access to generalist and specialist services
- Greater proportions of older people will comprise rural and regional populations

The afternoon’s session included a cross section of speakers from agencies that work directly with older clients within the Victorian community, and included:

- Gwenda Cannard, TRANX/PADA
- Lisa Sammut, Ozanam House
- Jackie Shaw, Depaul House
- Sonia Berton, ARBIAS
- Kevin Clarke, Consumer Perspective

Points made by the speakers in this session included:

- That there is no difference between the success of older and younger people in ability to reduce benzodiazepine use
- The need for ‘wet’ as well as ‘dry’ accommodation for older clients
- The importance of holistic solutions in treating older clients
- A challenge to the myth that if you’re an English speaking, white, male and aged between 35-55 you automatically belong to a privileged group
- People with ARBI tend not to enter treatment as there is an unwillingness to cease alcohol or drug use as it has been a constant for so long

Presentations from the forum are now available on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au and a report will be available in coming weeks.

VAADA would like to thank the presenters and Terry Laidler (forum facilitator) and all those who attended.

Month in Review

Politician's visits to AOD agencies

As part of Drug Action Week® 2005 VAADA organised 20 visits to agencies by politicians. Many others have contacted VAADA seeking alternative appointment times and other activities.

VAADA would like to thank all politicians who visited agencies during the week including:

- Ann Corcoran, Federal Member for Isaacs
- Anna Burke, Member for Chisholm
- Bill Baxter, Member for North Eastern Province
- Bill Forwood, Member for Templestowe Province
- Daniel Andrews, State Member for Mulgrave
- Gavin Jennings, Member for Melbourne Province
- Geoff Hilton, Western Port Province
- Glenyys Romanes, Member for Melbourne Province
- Richard Dalla-Riva, State Member for East Yarra Province
- Matt Viney, Member for Chelsea Province
- Ian Trezise, Member for Geelong
- Maxine Morand, State Member for Mt Waverley
- Murray Thompson, Member for Sandringham
- Noel Pullen, Member for Higginbotham Province
- Peter Ryan, Member for Gippsland South
- Rosy Buchanan, Member for Hastings
- Steve Herbert, Eltham
- Terry Mulder, Member for Polwarth
- Tony Plowman, Member for Benambra
- Wendy Lovell, Member for North Eastern Province

VAADA would like to thank all Victorian politicians who expressed an interest in the work of Victorian agencies.

National Alcohol Strategy

Professor Margaret Hamilton has been engaged on behalf of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy to lead the development of a new National Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009. As part of the process of developing the new strategy, a comprehensive, broad national consultation round, where Professor Hamilton could consult with stakeholders, was deemed vital.

On Friday 27th May 2005 at the Melbourne Town Hall, VAADA and Turning Point hosted a consultation for the Victorian Alcohol and Other Drug Sector, to comment on the recently released consultation paper on the new National Alcohol Strategy.

It is anticipated that the final version of the new Strategy will be submitted to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in November 2005 for consideration.

A Fairer Victoria – further consultation

The Bracks' Government's social policy statement – A Fairer Victoria – and its implications for the community sector has been the subject of considerable discussion throughout June.

A Forum hosted by VCOSS on 8 June explored Strategies for Action in response to A Fairer Victoria. John Thwaites (Minister for Victorian Communities) and Rob Hulls (Attorney-General) attended the Forum – which provided an opportunity for those sectors who attended to discuss their views about implementing the directions contained in the social policy statement.

The bi-annual DHS Secretary's Forum was held on 23 June and took the discussion further. Issues discussed included – implications for local government and communities agencies, the establishment of Regional Management Forums, strengthening partnership arrangements and strategies for changing the way governments work.

Papers from the recent conference on Governments and Communities in Partnership (held by The Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence) can be downloaded at: http://www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/events/next_steps.html



Paul McDonald presenting at the VAADA forum 'Older but not forgotten?'

YOUR SAY
"Nothing Human Is Alien To Me"
Jackie Shaw-Depaul House

This is a heavily edited version of Jackie's presentation a complete version can be found at www.vaada.org.au

I trained as a nurse in England in a large London Hospital called the Royal London Hospital.

I learned many things there; one of the most important things I learned was the motto of the Hospital. It said "Nothing Human is Alien to Me". Alien as in strange. It meant literally anything I saw or touched or encountered or learned about this seething mass of humanity, was to be judged as only the same as me, that what ever happened to them could happen to me, and that they were my family.

When I migrated to Australia and came to live in Melbourne I encountered a similar philosophy at St.Vincent's Hospital. The values are Compassion, Justice, Human Dignity, Excellence, and Unity.

I was impressed with a concept I was introduced to that I believe is not much encountered outside of church based organisations, like the Catholic system, the Salvation Army, the City Missions, although I see it in the philosophy of AOD treatment, expressed as non-judgementalism and unconditional positive regard.

The concept is that individuals deserve respect of and for themselves and their chosen path no matter what that path is, or where it takes them, even if it is self-destructive. Even if one does not agree with it on any grounds.

That means that if a person chooses to live an alcoholic or otherwise addicted life, and, having been offered options to change, decides to continue that life, then they deserve recognition of their needs, support for their decision and respect for their humanity.

Many of the population of older alcohol dependant homeless men have depression and anxiety disorders as a basic minimum, and often substance induced Brain Injury, alongside the many physical health issues.

Most are too young to be assessed for Aged Care, usually being under 60 but looking and medically presenting as 15 years older than their real age. Often they are in their 40-50's. How do they deal with their disenfranchised grief over alcohol related dementia or the concern of their

families and medical advisers over the Wernicke's encephalopathy, with its sad trajectory.

Luckily there are some places that offer them a decent lifestyle, recognising the need to allow them to follow their choice, helping them to adjust to communal living.

Ozanam House and Corpus Christi at Greenvale, are two agencies who offer a respite to older homeless men with substance abuse.

At Corpus the staff will work with a man if he wishes to stop drinking or taking his drugs of choice, setting up a treatment plan and helping him work through it.

But if the person doesn't see themselves as becoming abstinent they are very flexible in their approach, concentrating on the person's behaviour, rather than whether they are using.

They are tolerant of brain damage, and if the person is on a binge may send them to The Way for a week to take a break.

The Way is a house where homeless (usually older men) can go to live. It is a group home, with 10 residents, with volunteers to assist with managing the domestic maintenance.

The men can continue to drink or use outside the house, and do so often just outside on the pavement. They are free to come and go but usually return to their room and hand over the grog each night, and have good meals available each day. It is a 'wet house' to use an old term.

I know these people are human beings who are not strangers to me but part of the human family.

I would urge all of us to view these 'frequent flyers' as I call them, who come though our doors for a few years before getting into aged care or dying, with compassion and human dignity, seek justice for them in terms of providing some quality of life in their middle and later years, recognising that no one chooses to become dependent on a substance that will probably kill them, and that most have horrific and heroic stories that both preceded and resulted from their lifestyle.

They are not strangers to us; they are what we would be, given the same conditions. They must not be forgotten.

Calendar of Events

July 8	<p><i>"Going straight ... or gaily forward?" - Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series.</i> Presented by David Chong, consultant for the Southern Dual Diagnosis Service - Monash Region. This provocative seminar will discuss challenging aspects of AOD counselling and psychotherapy with the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) population, such as internalised homophobia, heteronormativity and other non spoken issues. Held at 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413 to register.</p>
July 12	<p>Three Day Workshop offering AOD Service Managers, Chisholm Institute. Supervisors and Coordinator's Accredited Diploma Level Training in: Managing the organisation's finances, accounts and resources, part of the Alcohol and other Drugs Workforce Development Strategy. Tuesday July 12 – Thursday July 14, 8.45am for a 9.00am start 4.30pm finish at the Chisholm Institute – Dandenong Campus, 121 Stud Road Dandenong Room A 122 – Meeting Room. Luncheon and Light Refreshments Provided. For further details and information please contact; Geoff Sheehan (Project Coordinator), Mobile 0437 360 147 Email Geoffrey.Sheehan@chisholm.vic.edu.au</p>
July 13	<p><i>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: Treatment for anxiety disorders... TRANX/PADA</i> To be held between 9.30am-4.00pm at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre. Costs for workshops are: \$88 inc GST for a half day workshops; full day workshops \$192.50 inc GST. Workshops will include morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. TRANX/PADA members will receive a 10% discount as will agencies enrolling more than three staff members. For further information call TRANX on 9886 0955</p>
July 21	<p><i>Benzodiazepines, Pregnancy & the Infant (Presented with TRANX & the Women's ADS)</i> This session is an annual combined presentation with the Women's ADS team and TRANX. It explores the prescribed use and misuse of benzodiazepines in the community, and the impact of benzodiazepines on pregnancy and the newborn. Presented at the Royal Women's Hospital, between 9am – 1pm in the Supper Room, Basement. For all bookings and enquiries contact: Tony – Ph 03 9344 3631 or Email: womens.ads@wh.org.au</p>
July 22	<p><i>Overview of Personality Disorders- Moreland Hall Lunchtime Seminar Series</i> Presentation by Bill Carta, Nurse Co-coordinator, Lesley-Anne Place (Adult Withdrawal Unit) UC Moreland Hall. Discussion of personality disorders, their presentations and management strategies within the AOD treatment context The seminar will be held from 12.30-1.30pm at Moreland Hall, with refreshments provided. For information or to register to attend please phone 9386 2876</p>
July 22	<p><i>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: Treatment for anxiety disorders... TRANX/PADA</i> To be held between 9.30am-4.00pm at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre. Costs for workshops are: \$88 inc GST for a half day workshops; full day workshops \$192.50 inc GST. Workshops will include morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. TRANX/PADA members will receive a 10% discount as will agencies enrolling more than three staff members. For further information call TRANX on 9886 0955</p>
August 10	<p><i>"Cannabis Use and Mental Health in Adolescence and Young Adulthood" - Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series</i> .Prof David M. Fergusson Department of Psychological Medicine, Christchurch School of Medicine & Health Sciences Note: This Talking Point is being held at 54 Gertrude Street Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413 to register.</p>
August 11-12	<p><i>The 6th Annual Rural Victorian Alcohol & Drug Conference (RVADC)</i> The State's only rural-specific alcohol & other drug (AOD) Conference. The two-day Conference brings the best professionals in the field of AOD to south west Victoria: remarkable people doing remarkable things when it comes to AOD related health promotion, community development, project development, treatment, and research. Enquiries to Email: enquiries@wadac.wrad.org.au Web: www.wadac.wrad.org.au</p>