



Victoria's AOD Sector response to the Service System Review

VAADA has completed its draft response to the Service System Review final report. The response closely reflects the major issues raised in consultations with approximately 300 people in the sector. VAADA has made a series of recommendations based on this feedback.

Some of the key issues are outlined below:

Cost neutral context of the report

This issue related to the lack of funding available to support major service system change. Adequate resourcing must be a priority if service provision is not to be the casualty.

Narrow definition of drug treatment

The recommendation in the report that the drug treatment service system should not include health and welfare services, harm reduction initiatives and other drug treatment services was a point of significant contention for the NGO sector.

Evidence base of the report

Many respondents highlighted concerns about the basis of evidence used to make recommendations in the report, and the apparent stronger weighting of international empirical data that is inconsistent with the realities faced by Victorian drug treatment service providers.

The establishment of Central Intake Units (CIUs)

Many questions arose in relation to the proposed establishment of CIUs including cost implications, the practical impact of the establishment of this new model, and the potential for multiple layers of assessment and entry to the treatment system.

Focus on acute rather than chronic care of AOD clients

Many respondents believed that the Service System Review failed to acknowledge and support the long term chronic care of people with drug problems.

Medically focussed model of drug treatment

Three major issues were identified in relation to the medically focussed model of drug treatment service delivery recommended, including the language in the report; comparisons and contrasts with health and medical models of service delivery; and the recommended drug treatment mix favouring medical treatments over social models of health.

Consultation with the sector on the review

Many respondents questioned the extent to which reviewers had adequately consulted the sector in the development of the report and questioned the commitment of government to appropriately resource and support consultation with the sector following release of the review report.

Recommendations for drug specific treatments or service types

Many respondents queried evidence informing the review findings. Most feedback concerned the management of cannabis problems; counselling; four CCCC's and the new outpatient therapy model; polydrug use management; residential rehabilitation and withdrawal services.

Positive comments on the review's findings

While many respondents had made comments to VAADA that expressed their concerns about the Turning Point report, respondents also outlined areas in which they welcomed the reviewer's recommendations.

Based on relatively consistent sector feedback in relation to a number of key issues, VAADA recommends further consultation with the sector in relation to service system redevelopment and implementation.

The report will be available on VAADA's website shortly.

Month in Review

Victorian State Budget Briefing

VAADA will host a State Budget Briefing on Thursday 6 May 2004 at 2pm. DHS will report outcomes of the budget across program areas. The briefing will be held at Rydges Riverwalk, 649 Bridge Road Richmond.

To attend the briefing, please register your interest with VAADA on 9416 0899.

Commonwealth Budget Briefing Forum

VAADA, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Family and Community Services, will host a Commonwealth budget briefing for VAADA member CEO's and managers on Thursday 18th May 2004, from 2pm.

Please note invitations will be issued to VAADA members only as there are limited places available.

Drug Action Week

Drug Action Week[®] 2004 (an initiative of ADCA) will be held between 21-25 June 2004.

VAADA will this year be hosting a forum in conjunction with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YacVic) on Monday 21 June 2004.

The forum will focus on Youth Binge Drinking and will include key experts in the area. Presenters include, Dr John Howard (Ted Noffs Foundation NSW), Dr Yvonne Bonomo (YSAS), Dr Rodger Brough (Rural), Rob Johnson (Indigenous), Bruce Clark (Parent) and youth and alcohol industry representatives.

Terry Laidler will facilitate the forum. The Office of Youth and DHS drug treatment services will participate in a panel discussion. The forum will focus on whether youth binge drinking is worse than before.

Further information regarding the forum will be available in the coming weeks. To register your interest please contact Litsa at VAADA.

Victorian Drug Action Week[®] Events

Drug Action Week kits for 2004 are now available. If you would like to organise an event, require information about the initiative, or would like a copy of the kit, please contact Litsa at VAADA.

VAADA Board Minutes

The VAADA Board has decided to post a record of its board minutes on the VAADA website.

VAADA believes that our members need to be kept informed of key decisions taken and to have an opportunity to have input on issues of interest.

Supported Accommodation Network Update

VAADA has worked with a number of supported accommodation managers and workers to develop a report outlining key issues for this service type.

The report will be finalised shortly with a view to further discussions with government and sector representatives. The report will be available shortly.

VAADA Planning Day

VAADA Board and staff held a planning day on Monday 15 March 2004.

The aim of the day was to strengthen VAADA and its role as the peak body representing Victoria's AOD sector.

The day focussed on a number of key issues including:

- Membership and who VAADA represents
- Strategic planning
- Diversifying funding
- Communication activities.

VCOSS Survey

VAADA sent VCOSS' *'count the cost survey'* to a cross-section of our members. The survey was designed to look at what impact three year funding agreements would have on the sector and the \$30 million short-change that services will experience over this period due to productivity savings.

Most of those surveyed reported an inability to expand services, even when client numbers had grown.

The impact on services extends to areas such as ability to purchase new IT infrastructure, and the impact on staff efficiency by increasing the time staff needed to spend rectifying faulty equipment.

VCOSS are collating responses from all sectors with a view to continued campaigning on this issue.

GHB Overdoses

An increase in public and media attention has focussed on party drugs and, in particular, GHB following ten overdoses in Melbourne recently.

VAADA responded to a number of media queries on this issue. VAADA made the point that GHB is an unpredictable drug with dosage strength hard to determine and no guarantee that doses will be of the same strength or have the same effect. This is particularly true given the tendency to mix GHB with other drugs.

YOUR SAY

Ms Jocelyn Snow

**Executive Officer (to March 2004)
The Yarra Drug and Health Forum (YHDF)**

The Premier's Drug Prevention Council released a report nearly one year ago stating the cost to the community of heroin addiction.

We must be reminded yet again not to become complacent in 2004 when dealing with problematic illicit drug issues, particularly when the cost was estimated at \$845 million per year.

Since 2003 we have seen an increase in people using amphetamines, methamphetamines (ice), ecstasy, cannabis and combining these substances with alcohol and licit drugs.

So why are people doing this? Why don't we ever really look at the cause? In many instances when you talk to people, they inform you of a significant experience they encountered in their life and block out the pain by using drugs. If we only concentrated more on the core issues that are complex and more often disturbing.

We need to properly address poverty, family relationships, homelessness, education, unemployment, domestic violence, mental health, sexual assault, recidivism, post release support, the legal and health system, etc.

The social cost is prohibitive. We must penetrate the barriers and make systems work efficiently.

We still have huge gaps in service delivery that are not dealt with effectively and which are very noticeable in Yarra. We require more family support and to concentrate on the children in families where there is substance use.

Children are not the primary concern of many parents, and those children are missing out on basic needs. Food is just one of the issues that has been identified and no child should be hungry in Australia in 2004. We rely on charities to feed people like soup vans and organisations such as One Umbrella, but we should be doing more.

Perhaps local councils could assist the local community to develop and sustain a food co-op?

Did you know that Yarra has six times the number of people who are homeless in its municipality compared to the rest of Victoria?

Why hasn't the state government addressed this embarrassing statistic? It's appalling to believe that so many people do not have their own space, protected from the elements of the weather, and where they feel safe.

When addressing the drug issue, we should be focussing on prevention. It makes sense to fund long term prevention programs, just like the ones operating in the five Hotspots. Not for three years but at least a decade with evaluation included in every package. Governments never seem to visualise and fund long term projects as they prefer two to three year programs. We have witnessed the positive effects of those projects at the grass roots level. Realistic funding should be provided to manage and sustain projects that work.

In Victoria we have just been through another drawn out process of seeking funds from DHS for current and new programs. The Local Drug Strategy was implemented in 2000 for three years. Primary Health Care services replaced safe injecting rooms during that time and they have had excellent feedback.

People who attend these services speak very highly of how holistic they are in responding to the needs of many marginal people in the community. Art therapy, massage, doctors, nurses, community development workers, referral and support, and counselling are some examples of what is on offer at a Primary Health Care service. These new initiatives have been acknowledged by the state government and funded for the next three years.

We need a lot more money invested in prevention and treatment. I leave my position as Executive Officer of the Yarra Drug and Health Forum confident that VAADA will continue to analyse and determine what commitment the State and Federal government has made, and encourage debate and strong discussion within the AOD sector to make the government accountable.

The demand does not meet supply, but we can certainly try a lot harder than we are currently doing. I ask people who work in the field to have a stronger voice and reinforce the push for a much bigger slice of the pie.



Calendar of Events

2 April	<p><i>Advanced Benzodiazepine reduction and Withdrawal Support-Half Day Training – TRANX</i> Presented by Tomi Redman, this workshop will be held at St Paul's Lutheran Community Centre. 711 Station St, Box Hill (Cnr Elland Ave). To register call Anne Smarelli 9886 0649. Morning tea provided. Cost \$55 + \$5.50 GST.</p>
16 April	<p><i>Substance-Related Brain Injury: What Does the Research Tell Us And How Can We Respond? - Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series</i> Presented by Martin Jackson, Director, Psychology Clinic, LaTrobe University and Mandy Philactides, Alcohol and Drug Acquired Brain Injury Clinician. Held at 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413.</p>
18-20 April	<p><i>Club Health 2004 - 3rd International Conference on Nightlife, Substance Use and Related Health Issues</i> To be held in Melbourne, Club Health 2004 will provide an international forum for debate and exchange of information on nightlife policy and practice. Conference information and registration forms are available on the Club Health website www.clubhealth.org.uk or on request from clubhealth@livjm.ac.uk.</p>
20-24 April	<p><i>15th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm - International Harm Reduction Association.</i> To be held in Melbourne. For further details Telephone 9278 8104 or fax 9328 3008.</p>
21 April	<p><i>Relaxation and Meditation Training - TRANX</i> Presented by Gwenda Cannard, Director of TRANX. For program details, call Anne Smarelli 9886 0649. Cost \$45 + \$4.50 GST.</p>
21 April	<p><i>Better Sleep Training - TRANX</i> Presented by Tomi Redman, Psychologist. Venue to be advised. For program and venue details, call Anne Smarelli 9886 0649. Morning tea provided. Cost \$60 + \$6 GST.</p>
6 May	<p><i>VAADA State budget briefing for the sector with DHS representatives</i> To be held on Thursday 6 May 2004 from 2 pm at 649 Bridge Rd Richmond. RSVP's necessary. Please contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899 or vaada@infoxchange.net.au to register.</p>
14 May	<p><i>Cross Sector Partnerships Conference: Enhancing Service Delivery to Homeless Clients – Hanover Homeless and Drug Dependency Trial</i> This one day conference is targeted at both managers and practitioners of Mental Health, Drug Treatment, Housing and Homeless Services. To register please contact Thalia on 9695 8361 or tlogothetis@hanover.org.au.</p>
14 May	<p><i>Domestic Violence and Alcohol - Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series</i> To be presented by Virginia Geddes, Coordinator, and Margot Scott, Training Coordinator, Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre. Held at 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413.</p>
18 May	<p><i>Commonwealth Budget Briefing Forum</i> VAADA in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services will be hosting a Commonwealth budget briefing for VAADA member CEO's and managers on Tuesday 18 May at 2pm. For further information contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899.</p>
26-27 May	<p><i>Adolescent Mental Health Symposium</i> To be held at the Hotel Ibis, Therry Street, Melbourne. For further enquiries phone Ausmed Conferences on 03 9375 7311.</p>
2, 9, 16, & 23 June	<p><i>Family Therapy Ideas for Working with Clients Facing Drug and Alcohol Problems</i> A practical intensive four day training program over 4 weeks to be held at The Bouverie Centre. Contact Miranda Manning, Odyssey Institute of Studies, Phone: 9412 7904.</p>
11 June	<p><i>It Might be a Scummy-Arsed Drug but it's a Sick Buzz: Chroming and Pleasure-Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series</i> Sarah MacLean, PhD candidate, Youth Research Centre, University Melbourne. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413.</p>

