



AOD Supported Accommodation: A program in crisis?

Supported accommodation managers and frontline workers recently established a 'network' to discuss their concerns about their capacity to provide quality services to people with alcohol and drug problems accessing their services in Victoria.

VAADA has worked closely with the network, supporting their efforts in developing a report '*Alcohol and Other Drug Supported Accommodation Programs in Victoria: A program in crisis?*' that draws upon the views of supported accommodation service providers across Victoria.

The report highlights that of the many supported accommodation services in Victoria, many are in crisis and are fundamentally unable to operate effectively in the manner outlined in the Victorian government's Service Delivery Framework.

Those involved in the network believe that the service description outlined in '*Victoria's Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services: The Framework of Service Delivery*' is unachievable under the current restraints for many reasons including program anomalies, lack of support for families and children and funding issues.

The report outlines for government a number of recommendations which seek to redress the current crisis in supported accommodation. These include:

1. That a formal network of service providers be established and funded
2. That children and dependents are recognised as significant clients in supported accommodation
3. That a review of the funding of supported accommodation be undertaken, taking into account the complexity of clients and the need for increased funding to ensure adequate levels of agency infrastructure to support this.

4. That a comprehensive review be undertaken of the current operational model focussed on:

- a. the needs of children and dependents and inclusion of family members in treatment plans
- b. legislative anomalies that limit the provision of supported accommodation services that meet the specific service goals; and
- c. current funding models.

The network has written to the Department of Human Services and the Office of Housing requesting a meeting to discuss these issues with a view to improving this service.

A copy of the final report '*Alcohol and Other Drug Supported Accommodation Programs in Victoria: A program in crisis?*' is now available for download on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au.

Budget 2004/05

Commonwealth and State Budgets 2004/05 will be handed down in early May. VAADA is hopeful that government's will make a commitment to AOD services, particularly priorities outlined in VAADA's Budget Submission 2004/05.

VAADA notes that community support for government's role in enhancing the provision of services is strong with one poll (The Age, p1, 28 April 2004) highlighting that 75% of Australians favour provision of services over tax cuts.

VAADA will host two forums to provide the sector with information about outcomes of both Commonwealth and State Budgets in early May (see calendar of events for details).

Month in Review

Is getting pissed getting pathetic?

As noted in last month's newsletter, VAADA in conjunction with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YacVic) will be hosting a Youth Binge Drinking Forum '*Is getting pissed getting pathetic?*' Mr Daniel Andrews, Parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health, will open the forum.

The forum will be held on Monday 21 June 2004 as a part of Drug Action Week® (an initiative of ADCA) at the Melbourne Town Hall.

A firmer program now includes national and state experts on the issue of youth binge drinking including:

Dr John Howard (Clinical Director, Ted Noffs Foundation); Professor Margaret Hamilton (Chair National Youth Alcohol Campaign Reference Group and Member of National Expert Advisory Committee on Alcohol); Mr David Crosbie (Member National Expert Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Board Director Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation); Dr Yvonne Bonomo (Researcher); Dr Lina Ricciardelli (Youth Alcohol Researcher); Dr Roger Brough (Medical Clinician, WRAD); Mr Bruce Clark (parent representative) and Mr Robert Johnston (Indigenous representative) and youth representatives.

DHS and Office of Youth representatives will participate in a panel session.

The forum will be facilitated by Associate Professor Terry Laidler.

For further information please contact VAADA.

Service System Review Update

VAADA's response to the Service System Review final report '*Pathways: a review of the Victorian drug treatment service system*' is now available for download on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au.

Cross sector partnerships

VAADA is one of several mental health, drug treatment and housing and homeless organisation involved in a collaboration to explore ways of improving service delivery to homeless clients who require a complex service response. This has been a long standing and difficult issue and one requiring sophisticated partnerships to overcome the problems faced by some of the community's most needy people in accessing essential services.

A Cross sector partnerships conference will be held on Friday 14 May 2004 (further details in calendar of events).

VAADA's Response to the NDSF

VAADA provided a response to the draft National Drug Strategic Framework (NDSF) 2004-2009 during April.

VAADA welcomed the NDSF initiative and the continued commitment at a national level from government to develop a strategy to deal with the changing nature of drug use in Australia.

VAADA highlighted in its feedback, the importance of a coordinated and integrated response to growing and changing drug issues affecting Australia's community.

VAADA made four recommendations to the review of the draft 2004-2009 Framework:

- 1) That the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009 should detail the achievements of the previous national strategy
- 2) That the informing factors in the development of the strategy should be outlined including a clear description of the strategic priorities and how they have been informed in relation to alcohol and other drug issues from 2004-2009
- 3) That the MCDS consider the development of a clear action plan for the next five years. The plan should clearly outline actions, responsibilities, key performance indicators and timeframes. The action plan should link to existing information in the strategy and consultation results.
- 4) That the development of the NDSF provides a good opportunity to raise community awareness and provide information about drugs and drug use in Australia.

International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm (ICDRH)

Melbourne was host to two major international conferences on drugs in April: Club Health 2004 (hosted by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre) and the 15th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm (cojointly hosted by the Australian Drug Foundation, The Burnet Institute and the International Harm Reduction Association).

VAADA Project Officer, Chris McDonnell, delivered a presentation titled: '*Chroming: a harm reduction strategy? The outcome of local political and media focus on chroming.*'

YOUR SAY

Mr Geoff Munro Director Community Alcohol Action Network The Australian Drug Foundation

The Australian Drug Foundation formed the Community Alcohol Action Network (CAAN) in May 2003.

CAAN was a response to our sense that it was time for drug prevention to tackle the alcohol problem at the roots – at the boozy culture that continually promotes problem drinking.

A number of signs brought us to that point.

Schools reported no longer holding dinners for senior students because they cannot control drinking before and after; parents seeking advice on how to control drinking at teenage parties; the organisation by adults of Schoolies Week as a binge for underage young people.

Concessions to the alcohol industry had proved it would stop at nothing. De-regulation of licensing led to a doubling of licensed premises and virtual 24-hour sales. It produced an army of pre-mixed “designer drinks” virtually tailored for immature palates. It had the privilege of “self-regulating” alcohol advertising but could not abide by its own rules. Tooheys was giving away its product to “beer monster” student parties.

We were also influenced by Georgina Roberts’ analysis of *The Secret Life of Us* that revealed how popular culture normalised levels of drinking far in excess of reality while winning awards for truthfulness. Georgina’s study of alcohol advertising indicated it violated the code of practice regularly. It was even using children’s playground language, “Come out to play” and “Play with two new friends,” with impunity.

The final straw was the attempt by a dairy farmer to market alcoholic milk. Even though he lost, it was a close run thing. We concluded our society had lost its perspective and it was time to say “enough is enough.”

So CAAN was born as a catalyst for action on social and cultural factors that help to form our boozy culture. Two issues we focus on are aggressive marketing and supply practices.

Already CAAN has 1000 supporters who want to take action.

So far that has included:

- registering complaints about alcohol advertising with the Advertising Standards Board
- lobbying for the removal of alcohol billboards near schools
- writing to Arnott’s about introducing alcohol flavours into chocolate biscuits
- protesting about retailers selling cheap alcohol
- protesting about alcohol companies lobbying politicians with free drinks
- contacting members of parliament about all of the above

Those steps are important. They prove the community is interested, they generate publicity and support, and they provide a platform for future work.

Many people want a change to community attitudes to alcohol. They are tired of the boozy attitude of macho culture, offended by puerile advertising, and angered by blatant appeals to young people.



Two senators, Lyn Allison (Democrats, Vic) and Jan McLucas (ALP, Qld) recently made speeches in parliament on youth drinking, pre-mixed drinks and advertising issues. Liberals have also indicated support for CAAN. That is despite the enormous, permanent, lobbying effort by the alcohol industry in Canberra.

Alcohol Advertising

Public pressure has caused the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy to review alcohol advertising. The government has threatened to impose a stricter regulatory system unless industry can comply with the current code of practice. CAAN is determined to hold the industry accountable.

To make that process easy we have set up the CAAN Complaints Line on 9278 8162. You can use it to register a complaint about advertising or marketing, or write to CAAN via e-mail or post. We look forward to your contribution and support.

Calendar of Events

6 May	<p>VAADA State budget briefing for the sector with DHS representatives 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>Cross Sector Partnerships Conference: Enhancing Service Delivery to Homeless Clients 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>Domestic Violence and Alcohol - Turning Point Talking Point Seminar Series 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>Commonwealth Budget Briefing Forum 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 senior managers on Tuesday 18 May at 2pm. For further information contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899.</p>
28 May	<p>A Conversation with the "RRAP" Panel Presented by Janet Farrow, Executive Director UC Moreland Hall and Dr Neil Coventry, Director CAMHS Austin Hospital. An Advice panel in working more effectively with young people at high risk and with complex needs. Contact Liz to register 9384 8836 or seminars@morelandhall.org</p>
<p><i>Advanced Notice:</i> 2, 9, 16, & 23 June</p>	<p>Family Therapy Ideas for Working with Clients Facing Drug and Alcohol Problems 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>
<p><i>Advanced Notice:</i> 21 June</p>	<p>Is getting pissed getting pathetic? The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association and The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YacVic) will be hosting the inaugural Youth Binge Drinking Forum as a part of Drug Action Week® 2004. The forum will be held at Melbourne Town Hall (cnr Swanston and Collins Streets), Supper room. Registration opens at 9.30 am. Cost \$50 members and \$70 non-members.</p>

Why don't we count the kids?

My Say piece published in Herald Sun, Carol Bennett VAADA EO, 5 April 2004.

The photo of a 5 year old lighting a bong with a bottle of spirits sitting on the table next to her (Herald-Sun, Thursday 1/4/04) is very disturbing, partly because I know of Victorian children in similar circumstances.

The five year old in the photo didn't earn the money to buy the drugs, didn't make an informed choice to use, do a deal to get them and know how to load and light a bong all by herself. The real story behind this picture is about her parent's lifestyle and the harmful impact that it is having on her.

On any given day in Victoria, about 5 children are referred to child protection for concerns about their parent's alcohol and drug taking. Of the 35000 child protection notifications a year, around half involve alcohol and drug using parents. Clearly our system is struggling to cope with a

largely invisible group of children whose needs are being ignored.

What do we do about the children of drug dependent parents? Why is it that if, or when, this child's parents seek help through drug treatment, the children are not counted, not treated, not assessed and not supported?

In Victoria, there are many children of drug users at risk of harm, but few if any programs to support drug treatment agencies in responding to the children of their clients. Do we wait until the children grow up and become the second and third generation of drug users now entering our treatment services?

We know what needs to be done to help them and their parents. It's time we provided all Victorian drug treatment agencies with the support they need to respond to the children of drug users seeking treatment, or at the very least, allowed these agencies to count the children as clients.