

VAADA Budget Briefings

VAADA State Budget Briefing

VAADA hosted a 2004-05 State Budget Briefing in May for the Victorian AOD sector. The briefing was an opportunity for people working in the field to find out more about the impact the budget has on their services and the sector generally.

Those attending the briefing were welcomed by VAADA President, Mr Neos Zavrou. Mr Tony Nippard, Director of Planning and Resources, Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Division and Mr Paul McDonald, Director, Drugs Policy and Services (DHS) presented the outcomes of the budget for the Victorian AOD sector.

In reply, Ms Carol Bennett, VAADA Executive Officer, presented VAADA's response, raising issues about the budget and its impact.

Unfortunately no new funding was allocated to drug treatment programs in the Victorian Budget. A VCOSS press release noted that although there had been an increase in criminal justice funding, this was not matched in drug treatment services.

In summary the total state budget for Victoria is \$28.44b. Of this, the Human services budget for Victoria is \$9.7b (program expenditure) or 34% of the total budget. The total drugs budget (health) is \$104.4m with drugs funding representing just over 1% of the overall human services budget. Drugs funding represents 0.36% of the overall state budget.



Mr Paul McDonald and Mr Tony Nippard (DHS) at VAADA's State Budget Briefing

VAADA Commonwealth Budget Briefing

VAADA, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) and Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) held a Budget Briefing for member CEO's and senior managers in May.

Health Funding

Ms Dianne Petchell, Director, Health Strategies Branch (DHA), outlined the provision of \$439.6 million for continuing measures under the National Illicit Drugs Strategy. Victorian agencies received \$3,584,875 under the initiative.

Other budget measures include a total of \$4.2 million over four years for the continuation of the National Alcohol Reduction Strategy. There is also \$8.4 million in new funding for the continuation of comorbidity and psychostimulant programs.

Family and Community Services

Mr Michael Brown, Director, FACS Victorian Branch announced a joint measure by the Commonwealth Departments of Family and Community Services, Health and Ageing and Attorney General to continue to fund measures addressing illicit drug use under the National Illicit Drug Strategy, including the *strengthening and supporting families coping with illicit drug use* program.

This program offers support, advice, referral and outreach services to families with members coping with, or at risk of, illicit drug use. This program will deliver \$13.6 million over four years.

A presentation was also made by Leslie Roxby from the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH).

VAADA would like to thank DHS, DHA, FACS and OATSIH for participating in budget briefings for the Victorian AOD sector.

Month in Review

Parliamentary Drugs Initiative

Alcohol Inquiry

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee (DCPC) is currently conducting an Inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption.

Terms of reference for the Inquiry include an investigation into the nature, extent and culture of alcohol consumption, advertising influence on harmful alcohol consumption and a review of the adequacy of existing strategies and of recommended best practice strategies to address the issue.

VAADA's submission to the DCPC noted that alcohol consumption causes 4,286 deaths per year in Australia or 395,000 hospital bed days per year (Collins and Lapsley: 2003).

To put this into context, the cost to Victoria per day is larger than the combined cost of crime (over \$1 million), health (over \$1 million) and road accidents (over \$1 million).

VAADA recommendations to the Inquiry include:

- increased random breath testing
- taxation reform and pricing controls
- strict and enforced liquor licensing laws
- adequate treatment programs
- regulating advertising sponsorship and media
- hypothecation of taxes back into public health initiatives.

VAADA's submission to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee *Inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption* is now available on the VAADA website.

Amphetamines Inquiry

The DCPC also launched its report on the *Inquiry into amphetamine and 'party drug' use in Victoria* in May.

The report acknowledged that amphetamine type substances are the most widely used illicit drugs after cannabis and it details 89 major recommendations to tackle the use of party drugs.

VAADA made a submission to the Inquiry and made a number of recommendations surrounding the issues of supply control, strategic partnerships, workforce training and education, media responses, regulation of rave and club venues, drug testing, information for users and research and analysis.

The DCPC report is available at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/dcpc/.

Agency Visits by politicians

As part of Drug Action Week® 2004, VAADA is coordinating visits by politicians to drug and alcohol agencies. This is a great opportunity for agencies to showcase their work. To register to participate please contact VAADA.

Soft Targets for Police Sniffer Dogs

VAADA and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) released a joint press release expressing concern about a new Victoria Police measure that will see sniffer dogs used to detect drugs on young people in nightclubs describing it as a victimisation of soft targets.

The measure aims to target small time drug dealers and people carrying smaller quantities of drugs for personal use at nightclubs.

VAADA's Executive Officer, Carol Bennett commented '*Young people may be a soft target for police but if the result is more overdoses and unsafe use of drugs, what can they hope to gain from targeting young people in this way?*'

Supported Accommodation Report

In response to the release of the Supported Accommodation Network report, DHS representatives Paul McDonald (Director, Drugs Policy and Services) and Tony Newman (Acting Manager, Service Quality, Office of Housing) met with supported accommodation service providers and VAADA in May to discuss concerns about current service models. DHS have agreed to work on alternative models and consult with the network with a view to presenting alternative options within 2-3 months.

VCOSS 'Count the Cuts' survey

VCOSS has produced a public report on the impact of productivity savings on the NGO sector.

The survey report highlights that 45% of organisations report a negative impact on programs and 42% of organisations reported establishing, or increasing, waiting lists for services. A further 29% of organisations have been forced to cancel or defer programs not funded by DHS.

The information in this report strengthens the sector's argument that service provision is being reduced to disadvantaged and marginalised families and individuals living in Victoria because of productivity cuts.

If you have any queries please contact VAADA or Frances Moloney at VCOSS. The report can be found at www.vcooss.org.au.

YOUR SAY

Mr Tom Stylli

Alcohol and Drug Youth Consultant, the Salvation Army EastCare

“Will legislation reduce chroming?”

On the 1st July 2004 the new legislation of Drugs and Poisons Act – Amendment Volatile Substances 2003 comes into effect.

This provides police with the powers to detain, search and confiscate any paraphernalia associated with the inhalation of volatile substances, commonly known as “Chroming”. Primarily the legislation is about reducing the harms and risks to young people aged under 18 and suspected of chroming. For those over 18, the legislation is intended to prevent them supplying persons under 18 with inhalants.

Will the legislation reduce the frequency of chroming amongst youth? Is it that simple? The answer is no. As with other substance use, legislation alone does not reduce use, rather a more holistic and bio-psychosocial approach is required.

In recent months there has been reported frequency of use, the chronicity of chroming has increased and the average age is getting younger. Chroming is a public addiction with young people often doing it in groups in public places such as train stations. Its use can't be hidden. Chromers' hands, face and clothes are covered in paint. They have a distinctive smell on their breath and use is often linked with aggression, violence and property damage. However, are the latter issues connected to intoxication or the approach others have when dealing with young people?

No matter which term you use, chroming, huffing, sniffing or inhaling – it is known as a gutter drug. Amongst the hierarchy of drug users, chroming is viewed as the lowest drug (and those who chrome are called dirty chromers). The chronic chromers I have worked with are young people who are 14-17; have a low/damaged self esteem and image; poor literacy/numeracy skills; and little connection with school, family and the wider community. They are often on protective and justice orders and are poly-drug users, preferring paint. They have little to no hope for the future.

A concern is that the legislation may push the practice underground and put young people further at risk with the potential of young people hiding their use to avoid police. There is a risk of young people dying from chroming as they may do it more on their own or in unsafe environments. If police chase young people we may see an increase in deaths from adrenalin stress on the heart.

Will the legislation change how AOD services respond to chromers? It is unlikely, however there is discussion about AOD residential youth withdrawal services being made available after hours for police to take young people for monitoring and drug education. However, during business hours services will respond as usual. Services will respond in the same way as they have always done around protective issues, duty of care and local initiatives. Speculation is that AOD services will see an increase in referrals especially from the police and child protection in notifications, but it may not make any difference.

It is the new experimenters that may increase. The legislation may work best with the green experimental user, who is still influenced by authority. The legislation does not apply to the over 18 year old chromer and it isn't an illegal activity. Services need to think how they will respond to these individuals. Protective exit plans need to take into account that chroming will not cease once a person turns 18 and they leave the protective system.

There is a myth that adolescent residential units will be able to use the legislation to have young people removed from their units due to chroming. This is not true. Police can only be called when the young person is putting themselves or other people at risk or are breaking the law in other ways (eg: property damage). **It must be remembered that chroming is not illegal.** Also if police remove a young person they will be returned when the intoxication has subsided.

Some questions that still exist with the legislation include, how do we reduce the concern young people have that police will abuse the powers of searching and detaining? And do we need specific chill out or sobering up centres for chromers?

The legislation however does have some benefits. For example police are encouraged to make referrals to AOD services. The sunset clause allows for it to cease or alter if it is not working and it helps all sectors working with young people to communicate better around this issue. The multi-faceted approach ranging from individual treatment to community development includes education, by-law changes and recreation programs for youth generally producing a reduction in chroming and at risk taking behaviour.



Calendar of Events

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 7900</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> Presented by Sarah MacLean, PHD candidate, Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne. Held at 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413 to register.</p>
21 June	<p><i>Is getting pissed getting pathetic?</i> 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 the Melbourne Town Hall (cnr Swanston and Collins Streets), Supper room. Registration opens at 9.30 am. Cost \$50 members and \$70 non-members.</p>
21 June	<p><i>Access All Areas! Service Education Forum</i> Are you confused about health and human services operating in Geelong & surrounding regions? - This forum is for you! Key drug and alcohol, youth and health professionals will be presenting a series of presentations on service provision, access and treatment in Geelong. Forum to be held: 21st of June 2004 at: City Hall City of Greater Geelong Cnr of Gerringhap and Little Malop Streets Geelong, From: 12.30—3.30pm. RSVP: Helen Reddan 52270979 or Paul Weight 52447372</p>
23 June	<p><i>GBH-GHB Forum</i> The Eastern Region Police and Community Drug Alliance will conduct a forum on GBH to be held from 3-5 p.m. at Knox Civic Centre, 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South on Wednesday 23 June. There is no admission charge. Places are limited so attendance is strictly RSVP by Friday 11 June to Wendy Smith on 9298 8377 or jackie.cooper@knox.vic.gov.au.</p>
25 June	<p><i>Drug & Alcohol Use In Pregnancy – Moreland Hall Lunchtime Seminar Series</i> Presented by Jo Rymer Acting Manger, Women's ADS Royal Women's Hospital. An overview of the impacts of AOD use in pregnancy, with a particular focus on benzodiazepine use and misuse. Contact Liz to register 9384 8836 or seminars@morelandhall.org.</p>
<i>Advance Notice</i> 23 July	<p><i>Child Protection and AOD Practice Issues-What Do We Need To Know – Moreland Hall Lunchtime Seminar Series</i> Presented by Stuart Oldfield Manager, DHS Child Protection Northern Region. An overview of the current direction of the Department of Human Services in regards to legislation, reporting, implications of child protection involvement and the process involved. Contact Liz to register 9384 8836 or seminars@morelandhall.org.</p>



Left: VAADA President Neos Zavrou opens the State Budget Briefing.

Right: Carol Bennett (VAADA), Simon Ruth (PenDAP) and Peter Matthews (Odyssey Supported Accommodation) speaking during a Supported Accommodation Network meeting.

