

VAADA Releases Youth Binge Drinking Report

The final report detailing the key issues, outcomes and recommendations from the joint VAADA/YACVic forum *'Is getting pissed getting pathetic'*, held on the 21 June 2004 at the Melbourne Town Hall, is now available.

The forum, which aimed to explore whether youth binge drinking is on the increase and, if so, what we should do about it, highlighted a number of issues and contributed to a number of recommendations.

The key issues highlighted through the forum included:

- Increase in youth binge drinking (especially young women) and the associated harms;
- The cultural acceptance of drinking in Australia
- The scape-goating of youth binge drinking as the problem
- The need for further social research
- The need to implement effective harm reduction strategies that we know will work but are more difficult for the community and government to accept.



The forum was held at the Melbourne Town Hall

Forum discussion contributed to a number of recommendations including the need for:

Research

- Increased social research, including culturally and locally relevant research.

Cultural acceptance of alcohol

- Making binge drinking unacceptable within the general community;
- Acknowledgement that alcohol is a drug;
- Acknowledging that drinking is a cultural problem affecting both young people and adults.

Harms

- The interception of drinking at an early age.

Strategies to address alcohol related harms

- Broad multi-faceted campaigns;
- Engaging young people in the issue of youth binge drinking;
- Alcohol taxation reform and pricing controls;
- Strict controls on the availability and supply of alcohol;
- Properly enforced liquor licensing laws;
- More appropriate and resourced treatment options;
- Increased random breath testing on our roads;
- Hypothecation;
- Changes to current labelling and packaging requirements; and
- Further strategies to regulate sponsorship, advertising and media in relation to alcohol.

The full report is now available on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au. The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee have also been provided with a copy to supplement VAADA's submission, *'Inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption'*.

Month in Review

Rural and Youth Service System Review

A draft report of the Youth Service System Review will be released to the reference group for comment in early August. The final report of the review is expected to be submitted to DHS in late August and will be available on the DHS website.

The reference group for the Rural Service System Review has provided feedback on the draft report (VAADA provided a 5 page submission) which has now been submitted to DHS.

New VAADA Vice-President

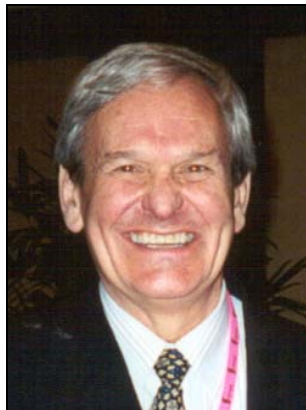
VAADA is very pleased to welcome Nick Bolto, Executive Officer of the Eastern Drug and Alcohol Services (EDAS), as the new VAADA Board vice president. Nick brings with him extensive knowledge of the sector and is keen to contribute to sector-wide advocacy through his role with VAADA.

Winter School in July

The Australian Drug Foundation of Queensland held its annual Winter School conference in July. VAADA Executive Officer, Ms Carol Bennett, presented a paper on '*Partnerships: The policy and practice*' highlighting VAADA's work with DHS on the Partnerships Project.

Thank-you

VAADA would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution to the sector of Professor Greg Whelan, Professor of Addiction Studies at the University of Melbourne and Professor Margaret Hamilton, Director of Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre. Sadly, two of the drug sectors most committed and eminent people are leaving their current positions. Fortunately, both will stay involved in the drug sector in other capacities.



Left: Professor Margaret Hamilton, Right:
Professor Greg Whelan.

NB: Thanks to APSAD for the photo of Greg Whelan

New Legislation and Policy

Chroming legislation

On 1 July 2004, new Volatile Substances Legislation came into effect. DHS has been coordinating the development of an Interagency Protocol in relation to the legislation. To assist Alcohol and Drug Agencies in their understanding of the legislation, an information Kit has been prepared which includes:

- Interagency protocol booklet
- Frequently Asked Questions about the Protocol
- Data fax back form (50 copies per pad)
- Summary page of the A & D agency response

The Protocol booklet and the Information Kit is available on the DHS website at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/index.htm>

Drug Driving

The new drug driving legislation, yet to come into effect, means that police will shortly be able to saliva test drivers to detect the presence of THC (cannabis) and amphetamines.

A 'Frequently Asked Questions' document about the campaign is now available on the Arrive Alive website. This information is intended to provide some answers to general questions about the initiative.

The document can be accessed through the VAADA website at: www.vaada.org.au.

Pharmacotherapy Support Program

VAADA is pleased to announce that the Pharmacotherapy Support Program, which subsidises medication for opiate dependent young people under 18, has now been evaluated by DHS and found to be of benefit to this group of clients. DHS have decided to continue the program until further notice.

Drugs Statistics Handbook

The '*Victorian drug statistics handbook 2003: Patterns of drug use and related harm in Victoria*' is now available. It is based on work funded by DHS and undertaken by the Epidemiology Unit at the Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre

The handbook describes major patterns of drug use and associated harms in Victoria and is available on the DHS website at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/index.htm>.

YOUR SAY

Ms Jenny Blakey, Manager Mary of the Cross Centre

“Newcomer on the block”

Mmmmas a new person to the Drug and Alcohol sector, what are my impressions?

In September last year I accepted the position of Manager of the Mary of the Cross Centre, which had recently become a division of Centacare Catholic Family Services. Mary of the Cross is a service for families who are affected by drug and alcohol problem use. It assists people, regardless of spirituality, cultural background, family type or any other criteria. Our name is Catholic but we embrace the whole community.

To give you some context for my perceptions, I come from a background of 15 years work in the community legal centre (CLC) sector, much of that employed as a coordinator (the Tenants Union – briefly, the Welfare Rights Unit and Fitzroy Legal Service). Prior to this I was involved with self help groups and consumer advocacy. My academic background is in social work and now management. (The twin evils – some will say, but that’s my bent!)

So what have been my impressions?

It has been difficult to initially work out who did what, that is, understanding who provided withdrawal services, who provided withdrawal and rehabilitation, who only did rehabilitation and for whom, who provided counselling, who provided family counselling and so on. Whilst this is well documented in various directories, negotiating this and coming to know it is quite a big task. Meeting people and physically seeing agencies gave me better knowledge of the different types of services and different approaches. People willingly gave their time and thoughts to me. Their generosity and hospitality to a newcomer was welcoming.

I have noticed that people have a strong identity with the sector, almost as if there is a feeling of a sub culture, a ‘we-ness’ and a strong affiliation with the people we seek to assist. People appeared very committed and interested in their work.

I was fortunate enough to commence just as the Service System Review Report came out. This gave me an excellent overview of the system and the various issues. The best orientation – to start with a major review!

The second major impression is the lasting impact of past competitive tendering. I struggled to understand whether this impression was due to my learning about the discrete parts of the service system. I do not have a strong sense of cooperation between agencies. Community legal centres (CLCs) escaped the competitive tendering process, despite rigorous reviews (well, at least for now). There was always some competition, jockeying and politics in CLCs, but generally we were clear on what each other’s turf was. Common interests, lack of resources and a collaborative ethos meant that we worked together on issues through many standing working groups comprising regular members from various CLCs. Some examples were, working groups on women and children, corrections, community education, disability, etc.

These groups prepared submissions to government on policy and law, developed projects, sought funds and established partnerships to employ project workers for specific projects.

I have not seen many networks of a similar nature that are issue focused and working together. There are the local networks, such as the drug action forums, which seem to inform each other of agency activities and local trends. There is

the network of Vietnamese workers and the newly emerging Family Alcohol and Drug Network (FADNET). Of course there is the peak network, VAADA. I am pleased at the active work of VAADA. I think peak bodies are important to advocate for the whole of sector and to act as information channels. In advocating, some agencies always have more power, if only through more resources to prepare submissions, produce materials and meet key people. A peak body is able to try to represent all views both publicly and to government.

I have been very impressed with the strength and push for evidence based approaches within the sector. There is a keen emphasis on building programs based upon research and evaluation, which produces recommendations and further knowledge. I assume this has grown out of that part of the sector’s professional base, which is familiar with medical and epidemiological research.



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Calendar of Events

4-6 August	<p><i>The Congress 2004 – Strategies for Equality and Inclusion</i> The Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) is hosting VCOSS Congress 2004 – Strategies for Equality and Inclusion on the 4th, 5th and 6th of August at the Victorian University Convention Centre, Melbourne. Registrations are strictly limited to 300 places each day. To register please contact the VCOSS Current Events Office on 9596 4207 or email@currentevents.com.au.</p>
12-13 August	<p><i>Rural Alcohol and Drugs Conference 2004</i> The Warrnambool Alcohol and Drug Advisory Committee (WADAC) is hosting the 2004 Rural Victorian and Drugs Conference on the 12th and 13th of August at the Warrnambool Entertainment Centre. For further information please contact Suzan Morey on 0417 103420 or suzanm@wadac.wrad.org.au.</p>
13 August	<p><i>Nurses Drug and Alcohol use and dependence: Creating Understanding – Turning Point Seminar Series</i> Presented by Dr Cally Berryman. Bookings essential, phone Turning point 8413 8413</p>
18 August	<p><i>Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Nursing: Moving into the future - Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia Symposium and A.G.M</i> Being held at Brennan Hall, Aikenhead Wing, St.Vincent's Hospital. The cost of the symposium is \$50 for DANA members and \$75 for non-members. For further details or to register online go to: www.dadaonline.org</p>
19 August	<p><i>Suboxone – a preview of the soon to be launched new pharmacotherapy - Southern Health Addiction Seminars</i> Presented by Dr Nicolas Clark, Alcohol and Drug Physician, Southern Health. Held in Lecture Theatre 2, Monash Medical Centre, 246 Clayton Rd, Clayton. For further information contact the SEADS AOD Hospital Liaison Team at Dandenong Hospital or MMC Clayton</p>
20 August	<p><i>Work in Progress: Perspectives in Partnership – Turning Point Symposium</i> The W.I.P. symposium is being held at the Michael Chamberlain Lecture Theatre, St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. For further information or to register for the symposium contact Tracey Brooke on (03) 8413 8419 or at tracey.brooke@turningpoint.org.au. Registrations close 6 August 2004.</p>
Advanced Notice 30 September	<p><i>VAADA Annual General Meeting</i> VAADA's AGM will this year be held between 1-3pm on Thursday 30th September. Further details will be available shortly to VAADA members. To register your attendance please call Chris on 9416 0899</p>
Advanced Notice 6-7 Decemeber	<p><i>2004 VAADA Annual Conference</i> VAADA will be hosting its annual conference to be held over two days on Monday 6th and Tuesday 7th of December. Watch this space for details of the conference theme, workshops and venue!</p>

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The risk, though, is a bias towards this emphasis. The current focus on community and family balances this. Sound research is useful in convincing governments and the wider community of the efficacy of various approaches, to advocate for further funds for particular programs and for particular approaches to the drug and alcohol abuse problem.

The other impression is the deluge of information. All those emails! It demonstrates a connectedness through the internet, particularly nationwide. News is circulated well through the different bulletins.

The downside is some people say too much, and some important information seems absent. The sector is busy promoting information through seminars and forums. It ensures shared information and gives a sense of pride in agency achievements.

And so, what do you think? I am sure many of you who have been working in the field for some time have different impressions and many have similar thoughts. Next time you see me around tell me what you think of this sector. It helps a newcomer, like me. I wonder what my impressions will be like in a year's time.