



VICTORIAN ALCOHOL & DRUG ASSOCIATION

ENEWS – daily electronic news, views and drug information
email vaada@infoxchange.net.au to register

35 Smith Street Fitzroy VIC 3065
Phone: 03 9416 0899 Fax: 03 9416 2085

vaada@infoxchange.net.au
www.vaada.org.au

2004 VAADA Annual Conference – ‘Are we doing a good job?’

VAADA’s annual conference ‘*Are we doing a good job?: Exploring the public image and quality of services for people with alcohol and drug problems*’ was held on Monday the 6th and Tuesday the 7th of December 2004 at the William Angliss Conference Centre.

The conference was opened by the Honourable Bronwyn Pike MP, Minister for Health. Minister Pike emphasised that AOD issues were not just the sole concern of the sector, but needed to be addressed by all of government and the broader community. Minister Pike also praised the AOD sector for its continued hard work and dedication.

Following this, retired AFL footballer, Mr Jim Stynes (CEO of the REACH Foundation), spoke about changing existing youth culture and attitudes around drug and alcohol use. He went on to highlight, that cultural change amongst adults was vital as adults model behaviours to young persons and that unless adults set an example they have no credibility with youth.

Ms Cheryl Wilson, CEO, Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia (ADCA), spoke of the successes of the AOD sector and discussed some of the challenges and opportunities facing the sector, some of which included: blood borne viruses; governance and engaging the community on licit drug issues.

In relation to governance Ms Wilson noted that the sector needed to be realistic about what can be delivered, to whom and by when, and be prepared to say no and renegotiate when funding is reduced.

Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), board member David Crosbie in discussing the conference theme highlighted that drug treatment and prevention are still generally under funded and

added that we still have too many alcoholics and too many alcohol and drug related prisoners.

Mr Crosbie noted in his conclusion that we have come a long way in ten years but that as a sector we need to push to enable us to deliver the service that AOD issues warrant.

Mr Daryl Smeaton, CEO of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation (AER Foundation) spoke of how the sector needed to increase its focus on licit drugs, in particular alcohol.

The first day of the conference also included a panel that comprised of representatives from various human service agencies and peaks, as well as Victoria Police and a press representative.

The panel gave those attending the conference, the opportunity to question where allied sectors perceived shortcomings within the AOD service system. Delegates took the opportunity to identify good practices in other sectors, which may be suitable to improve practice within the AOD sector with a lively and robust debate across a range of issues. Many noted the need to work across sectors and to improve partnerships with other sectors.

Conference Workshops/Presentations

Workshops and presentations were well received by conference delegates. A broad range of issues were looked at either identifying where service gaps existed or addressing how to fill these gaps.

Some of the issues highlighted were CALD communities, families, improving agency standing in the community, training, work programs, housing, integrating drug treatment and drug safety models networking, regional NSP’s and older people.

VAADA would like to thank presenters, keynote presenters, panelists and delegates for the time, expertise and participation.

Conference presentations are now available on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au.

Victorian Illicit Drug Driver Testing Campaign Panel

As part of the conference proceedings, VAADA conducted a panel session during the morning of the second day in order to clarify issues, answer questions and sector concerns around drug driver testing which commenced on 13 December 2004.

Jelena Popovich (Deputy Chief Magistrate) set the scene to the panel as the keynote speaker. Ms Popovich noted that the introduction of this legislation may potentially have a large impact on the sector, particularly by the need Magistrates will have for reports on people detected driving, while having illicit drugs in their system.

Ms Popovich added that the writing of such reports would require specialist training that would hopefully be provided by the Department of Human Services.

Ms Popovich thought it critical for the AOD sector to be consulted with and informed throughout the drug driving implementation process. She added that a thorough evaluation was critical to ascertain the impact and usefulness of the drug driving process.

The panel was composed of Dr Philip Swann (VicRoads), Inspector Martin Boorman (Victoria Police), Mr Bill Noonan (Transport Worker's Union) and Mr Brendan Lacey (Department of Justice). The panel focused on a range of key issues that included how long the active ingredients in substances being tested for would be detectable by the roadside tests. Other questions centred on amphetamines and exactly what forms of amphetamines are detectable.

Neos Zavrou, VAADA president asked whether there had been discussion and a solution to the potential resource implications on the drug treatment service system, should people test positive to drugs and be diverted through the service system for treatment and education.

VAADA will be conducting a number of forums regionally in the New Year, to help inform the sector of the ramifications of drug driver testing. Each forum will have representatives from Victoria Police, Vic Roads, Department of Justice

and VAADA. Details of these forums will be released in the New Year. A link for further information and fact sheets regarding the campaign are now available on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au.

Month in Review

RRSSR and YSSR Service System Reviews

VAADA has been engaged by DHS to consult with the AOD sector during the months of December and January (2004/05) on specific aspects of the Rural and Regional Service System Review (RRSSR) & Youth Service System Review (YSSR). These aspects are the Nurse Practitioner Model for the RRSSR and Indicated Prevention for the youth review which are now available online for the sector at:

RRSSR:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/downloads/rural_pathways.pdf

YSSR:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/downloads/youth_service_sys_rev.pdf

VAADA will be conducting consultations throughout Victoria during December and January however, there will be some limitations with the consultation process due to the holiday season which may exclude many sector representatives from participating during the process.

In this case, VAADA invites all those involved within the service system, who are unable to attend the consultations at their regional meetings, to send their comments directly to Evan Sycamias (evan@vaada.org.au – (03) 9416 0899) **no later than Friday 14th January 2005** for inclusion in VAADA's discussion paper that will be presented to DHS in February 2005.

A draft copy of the report will be available to the sector by February 2005. For further information please contact VAADA on 9416 0899 or visit the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au.

2004 APSAD Conference

Mr Gordon Storey, CEO of SHARC and recently retired VAADA board member attended the 2004 APSAD conference in Fremantle, WA and presented a paper on VAADA's behalf.

The paper, on 'youth binge drinking' focused on the culture of drinking in Australia and focused on the joint VAADA/YacVic Youth binge drinking forum held as a part of Drug Action Week in 2004.

The paper received strong media interest and VAADA provided media interviews in print and radio media. VAADA would like to thank the AER Foundation for their sponsorship enabling a VAADA representative to attend and present at the conference.

YOUR SAY

“Looking Back at VAADA Over 2004”

Mr Neos Zavrou, VAADA President

BEEN ASKED TO DO FOR THE FINAL YOUR SAY piece of the year. All I can say it has been a very eventful year with significant changes for VAADA. Looking to the future I can see the seeds being laid for significant changes for the sector also.

Over the past 12 months I am proud of the achievements of VAADA, achievements that have been made possible by the efforts of the VAADA staff, a committed Board and a strong and supportive membership base. Many areas stand out over the past twelve months and which I think VAADA has excelled in but in particular we have been diligent in our efforts to advocate and influence policy on the sectors behalf, the ability to develop partnerships and the provision of member services.

VAADA was active with both political and public advocacy in 2004. Highlights of VAADA's activities in the political realm saw VAADA co-ordinating a number of visits by Victorian politicians to member agencies, providing evidence to federal and state inquiries during the year as well as working extensively with state government ministers and members of the opposition.

An example of the work VAADA undertakes behind the scenes is our involvement in the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee and the various subcommittees that form part of this project. DHS along with the various state peak bodies has been looking at how to develop and sustain partnership between the funded sector and DHS. As part of this process a protocol has also been launched and available on the DHS website that provides clear guidelines on how the relationship between DHS and the funded agencies is to be conducted. It is important that we all familiarise ourselves with this important work as it marks a watershed in how future relations are to be conducted.

VAADA's public advocacy activities saw VAADA issue a number of media releases

The VAADA board along with the staff are looking at organising an alcohol and other sector drug expo in June 2005 as part of Drug Action Week. This is an important time to showcase the sector and the important work we do to the Victorian Community. Our ability to maintain a high and positive public profile is critical if we are to argue our case to receive additional funds for the sector in the lead up to an election.

VAADA is in the process of finalising our budget submission to the Department of Treasury regarding the sectors views on what additional resources are required and where they ought to be expended. Capacity building and sustainability for the sector, inclusive of full CPI increases, the ability to meet specialist client population needs, workforce development and the difficulties faced by agencies in retaining skilled staff are a few of the areas that have been highlighted by the sector so far. On a positive note we welcome the capacity to have three year funding agreements and the stability this provides for the sector in longer term planning.

One of the major areas in which VAADA contributed to policy development, was through our response to Turning Point's *'Pathways: a review of the Victorian Drug Treatment Service System'*. VAADA produced a comprehensive report which reflected how the review was perceived from a broad cross-section of the sector. VAADA is currently undertaking consultations on the Rural and Regional Service Review (RRSSR) and the Youth Service System Review (YSSR). Unlike the Pathways review, these consultations will seek to focus on particular recommendations that the department has an interest in. In the case of the RRSSR VAADA will explore the sector views on the nurse practitioner model and indicated prevention from the YSSR.



These represent a number of processes that the Department is currently undertaking in reviewing the service system and will inform recommendations for future change to the sector. Already there have been indications from DHS that alcohol will be a key policy area that the Victorian government will focus on in the near future.

Continued page 4...

Your Say, Mr Neos Zavrou – Continued from page 3

It is important that the sector ensures that it continues to work with the Department and has an independent voice in the shape of any future sector development.

Key elements of member services saw VAADA continue to keep the sector informed through the VAADA News, ENEWS and website services, and additionally, by providing a voice for the sector through a number of forums/briefings held throughout the year. We are looking forward in 2005 to undertaking a major redevelopment of our website with an increased capacity to provide comprehensive information through our website to both our members and the community.

As we move into an election year it is important for the sector to identify areas in which it thinks government can improve its performance in relation to AOD issues, and for VAADA to advocate strongly for improvements in these areas.

This year has also seen VAADA lose its tireless Executive Officer, Carol Bennett who resigned to take up the Chief Executive Officer Position at the Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agencies Group. My thanks go out to Carol for her efforts over the past three years.

I find myself being able to spend time with family and friends, but remaining acutely aware of the toll that alcohol exacts on the community over this period. Unfortunately, Christmas and New Year sees alcohol related harm in the community skyrocketing, including crime, violence and hospital admissions. From that sombre note, I remain positive that this situation can change within the community, and that we as a sector can help bring about this change.

Finally on behalf of the VAADA Board and staff, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.



SEASON'S GREETINGS

We would like to thank you for your support in 2004 and wish you all the

Mr Jim Stynes, CEO of REACH at the VAADA Conference

be 'Sector vs non-sector' panel at the VAADA Conference

Happy festive!

Ms Jelena Popovich, Deputy Chief Magistrate at the VAADA Conference

**We are king with you
The Board and Staff of VAADA**

