



## VAADA's Budget Submission Seeks Sustainable Funding for the Alcohol and Drug Sector

As concern about greater heroin availability in Victoria increases, VAADA is asking Government to adequately support the alcohol and drug sector. VAADA's 2003 Budget submission maintains that the needs of people with drug problems can only be met through appropriate resourcing of effective specialist drug programs and services.

On launching the submission, VAADA Executive Officer, Carol Bennett, said that drug and alcohol services were reporting an increase in the availability and purity of heroin on the streets and a decrease in cost. Ms Bennett said that drug and alcohol services were already struggling to meet the needs of people with a range of drug problems and if this 'spike' in heroin use continued, it would put increased pressure on services.

Media outlets including 'The Age,' ABC Radio National, 774 ABC, 3AK, 3MP and ABC News-Online covered VAADA's call for increased funding for the sector.

The submission is available online at: <http://www.vaada.org.au/2003%20Budget%20Submission.doc>

The four key aspects of the budget submission are:

### 1. *Sustainable funding for non government alcohol and drug agencies*

- Full CPI indexation on funding for organisations in the drug and alcohol sector.
- The core source of drug and alcohol funding in Victoria, the Community Support Fund (CSF), transferred to a recurrent basis.
- All funding and service agreements for drug and alcohol agencies to be based on a three year cycle (as will apply to most DHS funded

sectors under the Funded Agency Partnership Agreement).

### 2. *Intensive specialist support for complex clients*

- An undertaking that funding for specialist drug treatment services will be at least maintained at the current level within the next budget.
- Recognising that treatment is better value for money than imprisonment in addressing alcohol and drug issues.

### 3. *Workforce development for the alcohol and drug sector*

- The funding of accreditation for organisations who undertake workforce development.
- A minimum allocation of resources per alcohol and drug worker in Victoria to enable agencies to implement responsive workforce development strategies.

### 4. *Translating research into an effective tool for the alcohol and drug workforce*

- Resourcing drug and alcohol agencies per staff member so that they can collect and analyse data relating to relevant issues to inform future policy priorities.
- An independent review of the real costs of running effective AOD specialist services to enable reality based costing of government contracts and service agreements.

***Many of these initiatives are of no additional cost to Government. The cost of funding all these initiatives would be a maximum of \$9.9 million. This represents only 0.1 percent of the total health budget.***

### Three year FASAs for the sector

VAADA has written to the Secretary of the Department of Human Services seeking three year Funding and Service Agreements for the alcohol and drug sector. A return letter has confirmed that DHS is committed to negotiating with the new Department of Communities (which houses the CSF) with a view to obtaining three year funding agreements for DHS funded projects. VAADA is eagerly awaiting the outcome of these negotiations.

## Month in Review

### NIDS Treatment Grants

Carol Bennett has been appointed as one of the Victorian representatives on the National Illicit Drug Strategy Treatment Grants Committee.

Funding of \$61.5 million was allocated in the 2002/3 Federal Budget for the continuation of the Program until 2005/6. The Government has decided on a two-stage process for the allocation of these funds:

Stage 1: Non-government organisations currently funded under the program will be invited to submit an application for continued funding (January 2003).

Stage 2: The government will call for applications from organisations that are not currently funded through this program to apply for a grant for a new or existing treatment service (April 2003).

Applicants who are unsuccessful in Stage 1 may be re-considered under Stage 2.

### Workplace Drug Testing

The issue of drug testing in the workplace received significant media attention in the last month and VAADA has commented on this issue in the Herald Sun and on 3AK radio.

Carol Bennett noted that drug or alcohol testing in the absence of a comprehensive workplace policy was of limited and possibly negative value. The problem with drug or alcohol testing was ensuring its accuracy and its ability to identify the drug's impact on work performance. A good workplace drug policy should be guided by principles of work safety, health and productivity, include strategies in addition to drug testing and apply to both senior management and workers.

### Non-metropolitan VAADA board member

At VAADA's AGM held in September 2002, members endorsed the appointment of a second non-metropolitan member to the VAADA Board. VAADA is now seeking nominations for the position of non-metropolitan ordinary member (the nominee must be a VAADA member). If you would like to nominate for the position, please send your expression of interest to the returning officer at VAADA by the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2003.

*"The Passing of a Giant of our World.  
Peter stood so tall on the landscape of  
caring and of the World Therapeutic  
Movement."*

*Monsignor William O'Brien, President World  
Federation of Therapeutic Communities.*



### A Tribute to Peter Bucci

Peter Bucci was a dynamic presence in the alcohol and drug sector and had a profoundly positive impact on many people's lives. Peter is best known for his tireless work as founder and CEO of the Windana Society until 2002.

Peter's involvement in the alcohol and drug sector began in 1978 when he was seconded by the then Office of Corrections to a non-government organisation (Task Force). In this role, Peter established a formal alcohol and drugs program for community corrections clients and a day program at Fairlea Women's Prison.

In 1985, along with a group of influential members of the community, he established the Windana Society. This initially started with the purchase of a building in St Kilda and the commencement of an adult withdrawal service. He further developed Windana's services to include a therapeutic community, supported accommodation, support groups, counselling, youth drug withdrawal and a holistic health care centre which provides complementary therapies.

Peter's key achievements also included being a founding member and treasurer of the Understanding and Support Society and treasurer of the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association and the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association. In 1999 he helped to establish the Mirabel Foundation (an organisation dedicated to assisting children who were orphaned or abandoned as a consequence of their parents' drug overdose.)

Peter never lost sight of the human element of his work and knew the names and stories of many of those who accessed his service. Peter had an enormous commitment to those disadvantaged by substance abuse problems and contributed more than could be expected, regardless of the cost to himself.

Peter's capacity to listen to, empathise and engage with those living marginalised lives enabled him to inspire them and help them take charge of their lives. These things, along with his commitment to making a difference in the lives of those with whom he worked, are his legacy to the drug and alcohol sector.

*Peter Bucci passed away on January 27,  
2003.*

## **Your Say**

### **Lee Cooney, Director, Odyssey Community Services**

***'Doing Good Work Is Only Half the Equation'***

'We do not fund welfare, housing, or employment programs. We only pay for DRUG TREATMENT FOR DRUG USERS.' It wasn't the first time I had heard this comment from one of our senior State Government officials, but after my recent trip overseas, I felt I needed to respond. "Then why do you fund Odyssey Therapeutic Community? There is no one using drugs and their problems are complex and range across many areas. So can you explain to me what drug treatment is?" The conversation ended.

Six months ago, I was fortunate enough to gain a Milton Luger Scholarship from Odyssey to travel overseas and visit a wide range of drug treatment programs and services in the States and New Zealand. The trip strongly reinforced the idea that specialist drug treatment agencies have to champion what they do or find they will no longer be funded to do it.

In my four weeks away, I visited eight different facilities from San Francisco to New York State and then on to Auckland, New Zealand. Treatment agencies had complex charters often outreaching to thousands of clients daily. Their programs were diverse ranging from drug prison programs, therapeutic community models, intense dual diagnosis services and chronic homelessness. Odyssey New York work with over a thousand homeless clients a day whilst Centre Point in San Francisco access nine thousand clients in the prison system daily across the state of California. Shar House in Michigan ran several programs one being a 110 bed therapeutic community that is inclusive of forty acute mental health and chronic substance abuse clients.

Funding for drug treatment was under scrutiny. Just before I arrived staff in Shar House had accepted a 5% pay cut and Odyssey Village in Flint Michigan had put off a third of their work force as well as closing an innovative elderly hostel project that interfaced with the family program. Drug treatment services across the country were in search of the ever diminishing dollar. In some agencies I felt a sense of helplessness and an air of acceptance. Odyssey House Utah is accountable to 79 different funding sources. A contract manager's nightmare.

In New York I spent time with Dr. Stan Sacks, a research psychologist and dual diagnosis expert. His focus was on gathering and interpreting the evidence to both inform and resource the sector. His key message to me was "understand why you are here Lee, decide what drug treatment is and not only know you do good work produce the evidence to show you do. It's hard to stop funding programs that record and establish brilliant outcomes. Be proud be loud!"

I also met Psychiatrist Dr. Judy Ann Densen Gerber, the founder of the Odyssey House model that operates out of 10 facilities across the States, New Zealand and Australia. She spoke in earnest and shared her struggle to establish a safe drug free environment that offered a rehabilitation program using community as method. Her discussion around influence and advocacy for the drug affected client was an illustration of dedication and determination. In New Zealand the need for thorough documented practice and procedures was central to all service provision. It provided some insight into the push for quality assurance and accreditation within Victoria.

I have learnt that drug treatment operates within and around a kaleidoscope of complex human issues, across many domains of a person's life. Workers need to tell the stories, present papers, collect, analyse, reflect, measure, record, identify and discuss quantity. The sector must allow the data to speak loud to advocate, validate and identify treatment outcomes to ensure that successful outcomes drive funding and influence government. Without this documentation, the whole field will continue to endure the consequences of short term shifts in government priorities.

My new dream is that governments become interested enough in real outcomes to resource the field to properly document and improve services. If this dream was ever realised, people with drug problems would stand a much better chance of getting the support they need to make real changes in their lives. For me, this is one of the most fundamental priorities for VAADA. In the end though, it is up to us to be better advocates for our clients, our organisations and the value of the work we do.

### ***Drug services and the prison system ... a special issues discussion forum***

Presented by VAADA, the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner, Department of Justice and Department of Human Services. Monday 24th March 2003 9am – 5pm. Limited places are available for this free forum. Contact Amanda at VAADA (03) 9416 0899, [abolleter@vaada.org.au](mailto:abolleter@vaada.org.au)

## Calendar of Events

4 March	<p><b><i>Talking About Alcohol Public Forum – Turning Point and the Australian Drug Foundation</i></b></p> <p>A public forum featuring Prof. Sally Casswell, Head of the Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation in New Zealand, Prof. Robin Room, Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs in Stockholm, Ms. Leanne Riley, political scientist with the World Health Organisation. 9.30am – 11.30am, Lecture Theatre, Aikenhead Wing, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Fitzroy. RSVP by 28/2 to Melissa/Kate/Anne on (03) 8413 8413.</p>
18 March	<p><b><i>Alcohol Training Project – Turning Point</i></b></p> <p>One day seminar from 9.30am – 4.30pm. Dept. of Rural Health, 49 Graham St, Shepparton, phone (03) 5823 4500. For more information and registration contact Sandra Roeg (03) 8413 8702 or email <a href="mailto:sandrar@turningpoint.org.au">sandrar@turningpoint.org.au</a></p>
19 March	<p><b><i>Alcohol Training Project – Turning Point</i></b></p> <p>One day seminar from 9.30am – 4.30pm. Nange Gnulle, 40 Harley St, Bendigo, ph. (03) 5443 7891. For more information and registration contact Sandra Roeg (03) 8413 8702 or email <a href="mailto:sandrar@turningpoint.org.au">sandrar@turningpoint.org.au</a></p>

### ***Privacy Policy Compliance***

VAADA is in the process of complying with the privacy principles contained in State and National legislation. As such we are canvassing VAADA Newsletter recipients to ensure that the VAADA Newsletter and indeed any mail received from VAADA are welcome.

**Mail recipients wishing to have their details removed can contact VAADA  
(3 Alexandra Pde Collingwood 3066, phone 03 9416 0899, [vaada@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:vaada@infoxchange.net.au))**

As the peak body for the drug and alcohol sector, VAADA provides a number of services to advance the interests of our members. Some of the means by which we achieve this include effective advocacy to government, politicians, senior policy makers and the media.

In accordance with the privacy principles, please be assured that your contact details are used only to disseminate VAADA orientated information to you and for no other purpose. Additionally,

- \* Your details are used only for the primary purpose of informing you of relevant events and developments, seminars, research opportunities or other matters relevant to developments in the field
- \* VAADA does not use the mailing list to actively fund raise
- \* Your contact details are securely maintained
- \* Your contact details will not be sold or given to any other person or organisation without your explicit permission.

*VAADA values the opportunity to keep the Victorian drug and alcohol and related sectors in touch with what we do through our information services.*

#### **Conference Report**

The final conference report for the 2002 VAADA Conference ‘*Everyday Drugs, Everyday problems: tackling alcohol and other legal drugs*’ is available on the VAADA website at: <http://www.vaada.org.au/Conference%20report%20-%20final.doc>. Thank you to all who participated and made the VAADA 2002 Conference a great success. The 2003 VAADA Conference will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of December – put it in your diaries!

#### **Drug Action Week 2003**

This national week of activities (23<sup>rd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2003) aims to raise awareness about alcohol and other drug issues and promote the achievements of those who work to reduce drug related harm. Please contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899 or [vaada@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:vaada@infoxchange.net.au) if you are planning activities for Drug Action Week. Litsa is also representing VAADA on the National Drug Action Week planning committee, hosted by ADCA.

#### ***Input into VAADA Discussion Papers and Projects***

VAADA is currently consulting with workers and organisations in the alcohol and drug sector about

- \* employing workers who are, or have been, in alcohol and drug treatment \*
- \* induction of new workers into the sector \*
- \* workforce development \*

If you would like to have input into these consultations, please contact Amanda at VAADA on 9416 0899 or [abolleter@vaada.org.au](mailto:abolleter@vaada.org.au)