



Focus on Drug Services and the Prison System

VAADA's joint forum with the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner (OCSC) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), *'Drug Services and the Prison System – a special issues discussion forum'* was a great opportunity for workers in the alcohol and drug sector to find out more about new developments in Corrections.

The forum was structured to allow maximum opportunities for alcohol and drug workers to ask questions and raise issues associated with drug and alcohol treatment services in the corrections system. There was a great deal of interest in the forum from alcohol and drug workers with all available places filled.

The forum was opened by Kelvin Anderson, the Correctional Services Commissioner and Carol Bennett, VAADA Executive Officer. Rod Wise, the Director of Prison Services at CORE – The Public Correctional Enterprise, provided a valuable overview of how prisons work in Victoria and future developments in this area. Some of the questions and issues raised by alcohol and drug workers following this presentation included the need for a better management system for detoxification of prisoners in police cells and remand centres, the possible need for the provision of needle and syringe programs in prisons, the availability of drug treatment for prisoners serving short sentences and evidence for drug treatment efficacy in the prison setting.

The first panel presentation of the day brought together representatives from agencies providing drug treatment services in Victorian prisons. Some of the key themes of this panel presentation included the need for increased integration of medical and drug and alcohol services, how best to provide treatment for people who are at a pre-contemplative stage in their drug use, the importance of facilitating peer support for

prisoners in drug treatment programs, the need for choice in pharmacotherapies whilst in prison, and the need to better address issues of dual diagnosis and mental health.

The second panel presentation comprised representatives from organisations which provide pre and post release services. Common themes which arose in the session included the need for greater time and resources to manage issues which arise and the need to establish contact with people before they leave prison.

The Honourable Justice Murray Kellam, recently appointed as chair of the Adult Parole Board, outlined the role and powers of the Board and provided valuable information about factors which influence the Board's decision to grant or broach parole. One of the clear messages from Justice Kellam's presentation was the Board's wish that parolees be given a "fair go" along with a recognition that some lapses may be a part of this process.

Summarising the outcomes of the forum at the end of the day, VAADA Executive Officer, Carol Bennett, said "We have come a long way in how we respond to drug and alcohol problems in the corrections system, but we still have a long way to go. We need to pursue continued dialogue between our sectors in an effort to improve and ensure access to appropriate treatments by prisoners with drug problems."

Many thanks to all who participated in the forum, those who gave presentations and the members of the forum steering group for their help in making this such a good opportunity for discussion between the corrections and alcohol and drug sectors.

VAADA will be preparing a report of the day and will endeavour to pursue issues arising from the forum.

Month in Review

Workforce Development – Tasmanian and Victorian consultations

As part of its national workforce development project, VAADA has started consulting with workers in the alcohol and drug sector in Victoria and Tasmania about workforce development issues. This project is funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation and is a collaboration between the peak bodies in NSW and WA, the National Centre for Education on Addictions and ADCA. The consultations currently being conducted in all states and territories will result in a national report and recommendations for workforce development in the sector.

Consultations with regional and metropolitan treatment agencies in Victoria and a recent forum with alcohol and drug workers in Hobart have proven to be extremely worthwhile. The Hobart forum was a great opportunity to hear about issues such as pay parity, difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled staff and to get a sense of the common problems experienced by the alcohol and drug sector in Tasmania.

In an exciting development, a new peak body for alcohol and drug agencies in Tasmania has recently been formed and is auspiced by the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TASCOSS). We look forward to working with them in future.

Further consultations will be held in Victoria and South Australia in the coming months. If you are interested in taking part in these consultations, please contact Litsa or Amanda at VAADA on (03) 9416 0899.

Evaluation of the National Drug Strategy Framework

VAADA's President, Neos Zavrou in association with Success Works has been appointed to conduct an evaluation of the National Drug Strategy Framework (NDSF).

The framework is an opportunity for the sector to respond to issues affecting them including key drugs and/or alcohol issues in the sector, how the NDSF is relevant to the field, other principles for future NDSF, priorities for future development and how the sector can more effectively engage in a future NDSF.

The project will involve evaluation of four key components:

- Commonwealth Initiatives
- State/Territory Initiatives
- Advisory Committee Structures
- Links with other strategies

The consultant team includes Tricia Szirom, Neil Comrie, Neos Zavrou, Anne Blyth, Stephen Mugford, Jane Mugford and Cathi Moore.

VAADA will be hosting a forum for workers in the AOD field to promote and raise issues of importance to the sector. The forum will be held on Wednesday 2nd April 2003 at the VAADA Office, from 2pm to 4 pm.

If you would like the opportunity to attend the NDSF forum to discuss issues concerning the framework, please contact Litsa at VAADA on (03) 9416 0899 or alternatively via email at vaada@infoxchange.net.au.

Induction for new workers in the sector and employing people who have been in alcohol and drug treatment

There has been a great deal of interest in the discussion papers which VAADA is currently writing on the above issues and we have had some valuable discussions with managers and staff in Victoria in recent months.

Carol Bennett and Amanda Bolleter recently visited some agencies in regional Victoria to hear their views on these issues. They met with staff at the Western Regional Alcohol and Drug Service (WRAD) in Warrnambool, as well as Bev McIlroy and her team at the Portland Alcohol and Drug Service. Consultations were also held with staff at Uniting Care Outreach Ballarat and the Ballarat Community Health Centre. As well as gaining a regional perspective on induction for new workers in the sector and employing people who have been in alcohol and drug treatment, these visits also highlighted the challenges which alcohol and drug workers face in providing services in isolated and geographically diverse locations.

VAADA has also been discussing these issues with agencies in the metropolitan area, and would like to thank Windana, SEADS, PENDAP, ACCESS, Barwon Health, YSAS, Mary of the Cross, Taskforce, Moreland Hall and TRANX for making the time to meet with us. We have a number of visits with other agencies scheduled, and look forward to hearing their views on these issues.

Your Say

Gino Vumbaca, Executive Officer, Australian National Council on Drugs **'The Victorian Sector has its say on the National Drug and Alcohol Agenda'**

As part of its regular meeting schedule, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) conducts agency consultation forums. The most recent of these quarterly meetings was held in Melbourne in December 2002.

The forum was attended by over 70 agency representatives and included the launch of the ANCD commissioned report on Drug Policy in Australia. In addition there was a presentation on a selection of some of the most up to date drug and alcohol related research findings and information available to the ANCD.

At the conclusion of the launch and presentation, participants were invited to ask questions and raise issues of concern directly with the ANCD members whom were present at the forum.

What was striking about this forum was the raising of some issues that are generally not discussed at these open forums. In particular, I am referring to:

- The need for a greater level of participation of general practitioners in drug and alcohol issues, including methadone prescription in outer suburban Melbourne and rural Victoria;
- The lack of services and policy influence for people from a culturally and linguistic diverse (CALD) background;
- The problems faced by local governments in dealing with drug and alcohol issues;
- The need for injecting drug use related HIV and hepatitis C transmissions in the prison system to be addressed.

Participants also raised the issue of current funding models being used in Victoria for drug and alcohol services and how this often made long term planning and program implementation difficult.

Indeed their concerns over funding reflect one of the consistent themes encountered by ANCD members in these forums. These themes can be categorised as:

- A need for indexed and sustainable funding;
- A call for a greater focus on the licit drugs problem of tobacco and alcohol;
- A lack of suitable services for clients with co-morbidity problems;
- A lack of suitable services for young people;
- The growing level of support for economically driven programs, such as brief interventions as opposed to longer term interventions.

As has occurred after all previous agency consultations, the ANCD has forwarded a summary of all the issues raised in this forum to the Premier and Minister responsible for drug policy and programs in the respective State or Territory, for their review. The report is also available to the public on the ANCD website www.ancd.org.au.



On a strategic level I think it is important to recognise and commend the members of the ANCD for their unswerving commitment to consult with the sector on matters of local, state, territory and national drug policy and programs. This readiness to discuss issues in an open forum with people working in a day to day capacity with drug and alcohol issues ensures that the advice of the ANCD when delivered to governments is able to reflect the concerns and knowledge of the sector. Of course the willingness of the governments to accept this advice should also be acknowledged but I believe it also reflects the expertise and experience of the ANCD members to understand and articulate these issues to senior decision-makers.

As a result, there is better policy development and resource allocation but perhaps just as importantly it also provides the sector with a window of opportunity to shape and direct the Australian response to drug and alcohol problems. In my opinion this is an opportunity that in the past has been too rarely available.



Trevor King and Carol Bennett from VAADA host the Tasmanian Workforce Development Forum

Bev McIlroy at the Portland Workforce Development Consultations



Calendar of Events

2 April	<p><i>National Drug Strategic Framework Evaluation - VAADA</i> Success Works in association with The Odyssey Institute are conducting an evaluation of the National Drug Strategic Framework. This is an important opportunity for those related to, or involved in the alcohol and drug sector to have some input into the current national evaluation. VAADA will be conducting a forum at its office, 3 Alexandra Pde, Collingwood from 2pm to 4pm to discuss these issues. Please RSVP to Litsa on (03) 9416 0899 or vaada@infoxchange.net.au</p>
9 April	<p><i>Alcohol Marketing and the Media: Challenges for Health Promotion - Australian Drug Foundation</i> This seminar aims to inform and explore a range of different views regarding recent developments in the marketing and promotion of alcohol in Australia. The program will draw together a number of perspectives with presentations from researchers, marketing professionals and representatives from the alcohol industry. 9.30am – 3.30pm, St James Court Convention Centre, 12 Batman Street, West Melbourne (opp Flagstaff Gardens), Cost \$110 inc GST and lunch is included. To register call Kimberlee Senior on (03) 9278 8137 or events@adf.org.au</p>
11 April	<p><i>Forensic Drug Intelligence and the Community – Turning Point Talking Point Program</i> Lunch time seminar from 1pm-2pm presented by Cate Quinn, Manager Drugs Branch, Victoria Forensic Science Centre. Held in the Turning Point Training Room, 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on (03) 8413 8413</p>
16 April	<p><i>Better Sleep Training – TRANX</i> Workshop to assist health practitioners working with people experiencing problems with sleep. One day workshop from 9.30am – 12.30pm. Community Room, St Paul’s Lutheran Community Centre, 711 Station Street, Box Hill. Cost \$55 + \$5.50 GST, morning tea will be provided. To register please phone Anne at TRANX on (03) 9889 7355.</p>
30 April	<p><i>Understanding Anxiety Disorders, Anxiety Management and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Skills - TRANX</i> Workshop designed for health practitioners working with clients who are anxious. One day workshop from 9.30am – 12.30pm. Community Room, St Paul’s Lutheran Community Centre, 711 Station Street Box Hill. Cost \$50 + \$5 GST, morning tea will be provided. To register please phone Anne at TRANX on (03) 9889 7355.</p>
2 May	<p><i>Hepatitis C Issues in Prison - UnitingCare Moreland Hall Lunchtime Seminar Series</i> Lunchtime seminar from 12.30 – 1.30pm talking about harm reduction in an abstinence environment. Presented by Venetia Brissendon of the Hepatitis C Council of Victoria. To register contact Liz on (03) 9384 8836 or seminarseries@morelandhall.org.</p>
26-28 May	<p><i>Advance Notice: 4th International Conference on Drugs and Young People</i> Wellington Convention Centre, New Zealand. For more information, contact the Conference Secretariat, Australian Drug Foundation, ph (03) 9278 8101 or email events@adf.org.au.</p>

Drug Action Week 2003

Drug Action Week is a national week of action that aims to promote the achievements of those working to reduce drug related harm in our community through the establishment of activities and events targeting specific theme days.

The Drug Action Week Kit for 2003 containing information about each of the theme days and possible activities is now available. For a copy of the entire kit or for a breakdown of the kit into the 6 theme days please visit the VAADA website at http://www.vaada.org.au/new_page_5.htm. If you would like a hard copy of the kit please contact Litsa at VAADA on 03 9416 0899. Please note there are limited hard copies of the kit available.