

Beyond 'e': VAADA's Party Drugs Symposium

VAADA hosted a symposium focusing on party drugs and their impact on current day youth and culture on Monday 23 June 2003 at the Melbourne Town Hall as a part of Drug Action Week 2003.

Sponsored by the Premier's Drug Prevention Council (PDPC) and the City of Melbourne, the participants included 200 people from within the AOD and pharmaceutical sectors, youth councils, teachers, students, government, law enforcement, health and the members of the general community who gathered to learn more about the use and harms associated with party drugs.

The symposium assembled leaders on the issue of party drugs from around Australia including Paul Dillon and Bridget Barker of the National Drug and Alcohol Research centre (NDARC); John Lewis of the Toxicology Unit at Macquarie Hospital; Cate Quinn and Steve James from Victoria Police; Shaun Baxter from Monash University; Cameron Duff from the Australian Drug Foundation; Natalie Russell from RaveSafe; John Davidson from Enlighten; Venita Munir from St Vincent's Hospital; Damian Dambrosi from the Metropolitan Ambulance Service and Craig Fry from Turning Point.

The symposium highlighted a number of issues and contributed to a number of recommendations. Issues highlighted included:

- The increasing use of ketamine and methamphetamine
- Due to the ever changing nature of these substances, users don't know exactly what they contain
- One third of young people using these drugs repeat use within one month, and
- 90% of young people (in one survey) said they don't want to stop using drugs.
- Mass media scare campaigns targeting young people don't work

- Sensational media misreporting is unhelpful
- More acknowledgment and understanding of the issues among professionals who may come into contact with users is essential along with knowledge of suitable referral services
- Further exploration of particular themes are required particularly within Victoria
- Peer education, information and guidelines for young people must improve
- Strategic and targeted information that reaches a wide range of groups needs to be produced

The forum produced quality information, high level discussion and highlighted the strategies that will guide the way forward for the sector.

Presentations from the symposium are now available on the VAADA website at http://www.vaada.org.au/new_page_8.htm and a report on the symposium will be available in coming weeks.

VAADA would like to thank our sponsors, the PDPC and City of Melbourne, the presenters and discussants, and all those who attended.

Notwithstanding the complexities and challenges inherent in developing appropriate responses, VAADA hopes to take this issue forward with recommendations for a Victorian response.



Natalie Russell, Shaun Baxter, Cate Quinn, Steve James and Paul Dillon participate in a panel session at VAADA's Party Drugs Symposium.

Sector consultation on unit cost formulas

VAADA wrote to Paul McDonald (DHS) early this year seeking clarification about assumptions informing AOD unit cost formulas. Paul released the information at a meeting of agency CEOs in May 2003.

VAADA is now seeking your feedback about the assumptions informing unit costs for particular service types.

Please forward your feedback to VAADA by the end of July 2003.

Three year funding – a double edged sword?

VAADA was pleased about the announcement at the time of the state budget that the AOD sector would qualify for three year funding and service agreements (FASA's).

Unfortunately, the implementation of three year funding has hit a snag with the government insisting that a productivity levy be taken from the CPI component to ensure 'greater' efficiency of the sector. In effect, this means that the sector is being offered a reducing rate of CPI of 2.4% for 2003/2004, 2.2% for 2004/05 and 2.0% in 2005/06. This will further reduce to 1.4% by 2006/07.

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and its member agencies have agreed to postpone signing three year agreements pending further negotiations with DHS to achieve a more appropriate level of indexation for NGO agencies.

The VAADA board considered the matter at its recent meeting and is recommending that members delay signing three year funding agreements pending the outcome of further negotiations with DHS.

Agencies are not required to sign three year FASA's until October 2003.

A whole of government approach to drugs?

Carol Bennett represents VAADA on the Victorian Government Drug Initiative (VGDI) Review Evaluation Reference Group. VGDI is a broad strategy aimed at enhancing efforts to save lives and address drug misuse through the allocation of \$77 million over three years from 2000/01-2002/03.

The review is due to be completed at the end of 2003, at which time recommendations on the future whole of government approach to drug policy and services will be considered. VAADA will provide updates as the review progresses.

New chroming legislation

Legislation giving police the power to stop chroming, seize volatile substances and detain young people has passed in State Parliament and is awaiting proclamation. Recommendations from the Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into the Inhalation of Volatile Substances have formed the basis of changes to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Volatile Substances) Act*.

VAADA is keen for the sector to be involved in the ongoing development of protocols around the legislation, and feels that this will determine the effectiveness of the legislation and the impact it will have on young chromers.

Supporting the children of people experiencing drug problems

VAADA recently responded to the Commonwealth Taskforce on Child Development, Health and Wellbeing's discussion paper '*Towards the Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood*.' Our submission highlighted the importance of funding the treatment sector to respond to the needs of children of people experiencing drug problems.

VAADA argued that a national agenda for early childhood should prioritise research, resources and support for agencies to help them meet the needs of children whose parents are experiencing problematic alcohol and drug use. The issue has received some media and community attention recently and looks likely to be an important area for future development in the alcohol and drug sector.

The submission can be found at <http://www.vaada.org.au/VAADA%20EC%20submission%20-%20final.doc>

Victorian workforce development consultations

Thanks to all who participated in VAADA's Victorian Workforce Development consultations. The consultations highlighted a number of issues, both common to, and unique from, the Tasmanian and South Australian consultations which VAADA has conducted.

The key areas to emerge were need for access to training and information; resourcing for workforce development activities; pay and conditions; and career paths and workers' access to supervision and support.

The report of the Victorian consultations will be available shortly on the VAADA website.

YOUR SAY

Stephen Mihaly, Young Peoples Health Services - Barwon Health
“Is abstinence a dirty word?”

Steve has been appointed to the VAADA Board as the new non-metropolitan member. The views expressed in this article are personal and not necessarily those of the VAADA Board.

Alcohol and other Drug services in Australia are now provided under the theoretical and philosophical framework of harm minimisation in which we acknowledge that people do like to use various substances for various reasons. Under those principles is a continuum of frequency of use that ranges from daily to nil (abstinence). With regard to alcohol we have developed units of measurement such that a user can determine how much they will ingest. This has enabled many people to take more control over their alcohol intake by means of experimenting with a given dose to determine if that is the amount that achieves a feeling state they can be satisfied with. That is not to say it is foolproof, there are numerous examples of fatalities and injuries that attest to “experimentation gone wrong”.

Drink diaries, “controlled” drinking and pharmacotherapies assist clinicians who previously felt that they had little to offer clients who were experiencing difficulties associated with their alcohol use. Now clients aren’t being told to “give up the grog”. They are instead told that they should take their tablets, count their drinks, not eat salty peanuts etc. Those and other measures could help them to avoid drinking or major binges and thus gain control over their use. All the while we were congratulating ourselves that we were “really helping” our clients because they were learning about themselves, and developing strategies that they could still use their substance of choice without necessarily experiencing too many negative consequences.

However abstinence is an option that lately seems to be forgotten. Are we in the sector taking the easy option by not advising some clients that they would be better off (physically and psychologically) if they were to be abstinent rather than trying to cut down or limit their use?

Why is it that the mention of abstinence has “workers” rolling their eyes and muttering about conservatives who are stuck in the past?

Implicit in controlled use is the notion that a person will be rational enough to limit their substance use even whilst using a substance that is likely to effect their judgement and impulse control.

We in the business shrug our shoulders and explain that relapse is fairly well inevitable, that it happens to everyone and that they can get their use back under control.

Why don’t we want to confront clients with the truth that perhaps they just should not use that particular substance (or indeed any) in the future because they obviously cannot tolerate it and that those around them experience its negative effects upon their behaviour?

Does harm minimisation mean that we focus on the individual and don’t advise them to stop using so as to minimise the harm that telling them to stop may cause them, whilst ignoring or avoiding the fallout of their continued use upon others, both individually and societally?



*Inspector Steve James
from Victoria Police
presenting at VAADA's
Youth Party Drugs
Symposium*

*Final discussion session
with all presenters at
VAADA's Youth Party
Drugs Symposium on
Monday 23 June 2003*



Calendar of Events

11 July	<p><i>Why the Needle & Syringe Program is not based on evidence-Turning point Talking Point Seminar</i></p> <p>Lunch time seminar from 1pm-2pm. Presented by John Ryan, Anex Executive Officer. The seminar will be held in the Turning Point Training Room, 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413.</p>
24 July	<p><i>Pharmacology a means to an end. Prescription treatment for problematic drug use, what families need to know and more - Family Drug Help</i></p> <p>Being held on July 24 at the Caulfield Cup Room, Glen Eira Town Hall. Presented by Mal Dorian from Turning Point. For further information contact Angela Ireland, Project Coordinator on 9573 1782</p>
25 July	<p><i>Understanding Anxiety Disorders, Anxiety Management And Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Skills – TRANX Training</i></p> <p>To be held Friday 25 July from 9.30am-12.30pm at St Paul’s Lutheran Community Centre, 711 Station St, Box Hill (Cnr Elland Ave), Community Room. Presented by Tomi Redman, Counsellor and Education/Training Officer with Tranx. Morning tea will be provided. Cost \$50 +\$5 GST. For more information contact Anne at Tranx on 9889 7355</p>
25 July	<p><i>Second service provider conference ‘Health Protection Within A&OD Service Delivery’</i></p> <p>Friday 25 July form 9.30am-3.30pm at the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, Cnr Bell St & St Georges Rd, Preston. RSVP Elma Rabago on 9637 4097 or elma.rabago@dhs.vic.gov.au</p>
25 July	<p><i>Men’s behaviour change program – UnitingCare Moreland Hall</i></p> <p>Lunchtime seminar from 12.30 – 1.30pm. Presented by Andrew Crompton & Tracey Castilino - giving an overview of the clinical, practice and ethical issues in a men’s violent behaviour change program, and the involvement and support of their partners. To register call Liz on 9384 8836 or seminarseries@morelandhall.org</p>

Drug Action Week Agency Visits by Politicians

VAADA invited politicians to participate in agency visits as a part of Drug Action Week 2003. VAADA received an overwhelming response from politicians and organised over 30 visits.

The agency visits are a valuable opportunity for politicians to gain a better insight ‘first hand’ into the workings of drug services.

Sincere thanks to all politicians and agencies who participated in visits.



*Victorian
Consultations for
VAADA’s
Workforce
Development
Project*



VAADA HAS MOVED!

The VAADA team has now settled into our new office which is located at **35 Smith Street Fitzroy 3065.**

Other than our mail address our contact details will remain the same.

Please update your details to reflect the changes.