



VICTORIAN ALCOHOL & DRUG ASSOCIATION

ENEWS – daily electronic news, views and drug information
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Alcohol – back on the agenda?

It's good to see alcohol on the agenda of the state governments! A couple of significant events (not just in Victoria) reflected this increased focus during August.

Firstly, our NSW counterparts have taken such a serious approach to alcohol related harm that the parliament hosted the NSW Alcohol Summit to look at alcohol related harms and strategies to address them from 26-29 August 2003.

Some VAADA News readers may recall that NSW hosted the 'Drug Summit' several years ago, which has been a major turning point in the way NSW responds to drug problems. Again, the NSW government demonstrates the extent to which these issues are given a high priority using this bipartisan approach to tackling the difficult issues. Further information about the Summit is available at: www.alcoholsummit.nsw.gov.au

In Victoria, Health Minister Bronwyn Pike and Minister for Education Services, Jacinta Allan, launched a \$1.4 million youth binge drinking mass media campaign. The slogan for the campaign is 'Is getting pissed getting pathetic? Just ask your friends?'

The campaign features advertisements which will run on television and in cinemas for thirteen weeks, a ten-week radio campaign and print advertising in outdoor locations frequented by teenagers throughout the state.

Internet advertising will also feature on sites with heavy traffic for young people.

In launching the campaign, Minister Pike emphasised that the campaign aims to take a new approach to highlighting the impact of binge drinking on young people.

VAADA hopes that this momentum will not only be maintained but escalated to ensure a reduction in alcohol related harm in Victoria.

Getting past the rhetoric: a VAADA discussion paper

VAADA's discussion paper, 'Getting past the rhetoric: employing people who have had drug problems in the alcohol and other drug sector' is now available on our website at <http://www.vaada.org.au/Publications.htm>.

In developing this paper, VAADA consulted with over 50 workers and managers representing 21 Victorian alcohol and drug agencies in metropolitan and regional areas.

The paper highlights the complexity of this issue particularly in relation to duty of care of organisations and the impact of Equal Opportunity and Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

The paper outlines six themes that have arisen from consultation with the sector and provides five key recommendations.

VAADA would like to thank the many people who took the time to share their views on this issue with us.

Launch of 'The Little Purple Book'

VAADA has compiled the 'Little Purple Book,' a directory of drug and alcohol services in the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR). The directory, funded by DHS in the Southern Metropolitan Region, includes referral details for 119 services provided by 51 agencies in the SMR.

The directory will be launched in September 2003 and will be followed with four information forums held around the SMR to promote and distribute the directory.

Venue details and times for the launch and the various information sessions can be found on the VAADA website at www.vaada.org.au. To attend one of these forums send your contact details to vaada@infoxchange.net.au or phone VAADA on 9416 0899.

Month in Review

Party drugs report launch

The recommendations of VAADA's Party Drugs Symposium report *'Beyond 'e': exploring the impact of party drugs on current day youth and culture'* received significant public and media attention during August.

VAADA Executive Officer, Carol Bennett, was interviewed extensively in the media including 3AW, SBS Radio, ABC Radio Victoria, ABC Melbourne, 3LO, 3RN, 3AK, Triple J, Nova, Mix FM, MX Newspaper, Australian Associated Press, The Age and Herald Sun newspapers with coverage even reaching as far as Northern Territory radio.

VAADA has sought a response to the recommendations from Health Minister Pike and looks forward to keeping the issue of party drugs on the political agenda.

Campaign Unity amongst Victorian community sector

More than 3000 vocal supporters (including an exceptional number of AOD sector representatives) attended the VCOSS productivity cuts campaign 'Day of Action' at Treasury Place on 12 August 2003. The event received extensive media coverage including stories on Stateline, TV and radio coverage of the day as well as major coverage in the Leader press, The Age and Herald Sun. There has been ongoing regional coverage since the event.

In August, VCOSS delivered 3,000 postcards to Premier Bracks and are considering the option of a subscription advertisement in major newspapers.

Parliament returns on 16 September, and a series of continuing activities are planned to pressure Government. The next public day of action will coincide with the recommencement of Parliament (16 September 2003). It is believed that DHS and Treasury are currently discussing an offer to put to the sector and when the Expenditure Review Committee meets this issue will be a focus of discussion.

The sector peaks are still fully committed to working as a group and negotiating one 'across-the-board' index for everyone, to run for the full three years, covering CPI and wage increases.

Any funding offer made by the Government will be considered by the combined peaks in conjunction with VCOSS.

This month's *'Your Say'* focuses on the impact of productivity cuts on one VAADA member agency.

The long term fix: what is the future of the drug sector in Victoria?

VAADA's 2003 annual conference, *'The long term fix: what is the future of the drug sector in Victoria?'* will this year focus on major issues confronting the sector in Victoria.

The 2003 VAADA conference will be held on 1 and 2 December 2003 at Rydges Riverwalk, Richmond. VAADA is calling for abstracts (form enclosed).

The conference will explore some of the current major issues facing the sector:

- How can services best respond to the shrinking government dollar?
- How might we keep the current interest in AOD issues alive both in the community and in the government sector?
- How do we form partnerships and creative collaborations within the health and welfare sectors?
- Will all agencies providing drug treatment be accredited?
- Will anyone be measuring treatment outcomes? If so, how?
- Will there be more or less stand alone intensive drug treatment agencies?
- Models of evaluation of practice: how do we know we are doing a good job?

If you would like any further information please contact Litsa.

VAADA 2003 Annual General Meeting

VAADA's 2003 Annual General Meeting will this year be held on Wednesday 24 September 2003, 3pm at Rydges Riverwalk, 649 Bridge Road, Richmond.

Three executive positions, one general board position and one non-metropolitan position will be available for nominations by VAADA members.

RSVP's to the AGM can be directed to Litsa on 9416 0899.

Have your say

During September, VAADA will be undertaking opinion surveys of *ENEWS* and *VAADA News*. Please take the time to complete the enclosed *VAADA News* survey expressing your views.

Having received a very good response rate for the *ENEWS* survey to date, VAADA would like to thank to all who responded and we look forward to receiving more feedback.

YOUR SAY

Nic Bolto, Executive Officer, Eastern Drug and Alcohol Service (EDAS) "Purely and Simply"

At the Eastern Drug and Alcohol Service (EDAS), we like keeping our heads down and getting on with things. We like to concentrate on our case work. There is so much of it about. That's why we recently decided to withhold our forth quarter data.

Why would we do such a thing? There are very few levers available to the community sector to get the message across to DHS that their position on the proposed productivity cuts are purely and simply untenable. Not providing data is one very real way of DHS being reminded that we are not prepared to deal with them on this until they come up with some new numbers. It also makes the point that if productivity cuts go ahead, we will come to a point where there is no more data because there will be no more EDAS.

In an environment of increasing demand and increasing costs, it doesn't add up to set unit prices at levels that don't actually meet the cost of service delivery.

Government calls this sort of thing 'productivity cuts'. Purely and simply, we call it service cuts because that is what we are down to now, reducing staff hours. We're already sitting on second hand furniture using second hand phones. The chair I'm sitting on came from the old Larundel Psychiatric Hospital. It was donated to EDAS when we opened in 1997.

EDAS stands to lose about \$20,000 a year from these cuts. It doesn't sound like much, but we have been losing this amount over the past 6 years and the size of the cut is set to increase further over time.



In an environment of increasing demand from the community and increasing operating costs, it just doesn't add up to set funding at levels that don't actually meet the cost of assisting the community.

It is twice as likely that someone will contact EDAS for an alcohol problem rather than a marijuana problem. It is three times as likely that someone will contact EDAS regarding an alcohol problem than a heroin problem.

Of the 8 callers a day, five will be male, only two will call on their own behalf about their own problem.

Who can explain to these callers, everyday people with everyday problems, that our expertise and responsiveness is less available now that it ever was? What is the real cost of withdrawing these services? Government publicly claim the cost of licit substance abuse is about \$5 billion in health and injury.

The productivity cut is about to increase the price tag to the community in a very unusual way. DHS takes \$20,000 from EDAS. We close an after hours service. Or wind up a mother's group. Or halve our ABI service. What happens to the cost to the community?

EDAS was there at the Day of Action on August 12th to support VAADA's position against these cuts and we were pleased to present our case on this issue at the rally. In fact, we prepared a banner that flew on the day with some pride. We are simple people. We flew the flag as advocates on that day for the clients that will suffer if these cuts go ahead.

Ms Toni Christie, Parent of an EDAS Client

Do you know the answer to these questions: Where will I go? Who will I talk to? How will I survive? Who will support me? How will I learn about drug addiction? How do I cope? Who will say that's ok to feel that way? How do you wake up every day knowing that this could be 'the day' when 'the call/police will be knocking on your door with the news that terrorises your head and heart every day of the year? I am shattered, depressed, stressed, confused, angry and NO-ONE understands. Who can I turn to?

I write this on behalf of so many devastated, shattered and hopeful parents who desperately need drug agency support groups to continue on and even expand. Loss of groups through proposed productivity cuts will result in *increases* in other areas.

I am a mother of an addicted child, a legal carer of my grandson and a person who *owes* her health and survival of many years to my support group.

Thank God for services and agencies like EDAS and VAADA.

Calendar of Events

1 & 2 September	<p><i>Adolescent Mental Health Conference – presented by Ausmed publications</i> To be held at Hotel Ibis, Therry Street Melbourne this conference will focus on adolescent mental health issues, teenage binge drinking, youth drug use, drink spiking and chroming. Registration cost is \$328.90 inc GST. For further information contact Ausmed publications at ausmed@ausmed.com.au.</p>
3 September	<p><i>Working with older women – responding to past or current violence - CASA House (Centre Against Sexual Assault) training</i> Held from 9.30-4.30 at the University of Melbourne, this workshop will help agencies and workers develop strategies to work appropriately with and increase older women's access to sexual assault and domestic violence services. Cost is \$30. To register contact CASA House on 9347 3066.</p>
10 September	<p><i>Naturopathy for anxiety, depression and drug withdrawal – TRANX training</i> Presented by Susan McCormack, TRANX naturopath, this education session is designed for anyone working in the health field. Susan will outline different treatments that may be used and will describe the role of naturopathy in working with clients with symptoms of anxiety, depression or drug withdrawal. Held between 9.30-12.30 at St Paul's Lutheran Community Centre, 711 Station St Box Hill. Cost \$55+GST. To register contact TRANX on 9886 0955.</p>
12 September	<p><i>Challenged and idiosyncrasies of treating alcohol and drug problems in a rural context -Turning point Talking Point Seminar</i> Lunch time seminar from 1pm-2pm. Presented by Dr Rodger Brough, Director, Alcohol and Drug Services and the Australian Rural Centre for Addictive Behaviours, Warrnambool. The seminar will be held in the Turning Point Training Room, 142 Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Bookings essential – call Turning Point on 8413 8413.</p>
19 September	<p><i>Why would I want those people in my clinic? – The development of the community pharmacotherapy program – UnitingCare Moreland Hall</i> Lunchtime seminar from 12.30 – 1.30pm. Presented by Barbara Taylor, Pharmacotherapy Programme Development Officer at the Drugs and Poisons Unit DHS - giving an overview of the role of the community pharmacotherapy program, the recruitment, authorisation, support and monitoring or participating doctor's and pharmacists. To register call Liz on 9384 8836 or seminarseries@morelandhall.org.</p>
24 September	<p><i>2003 VAADA Annual General Meeting</i> VAADA's AGM will this year be held at 3 pm on Wednesday 24th September at Rydges Riverwalk - 649 Bridge Road, Richmond. If you would like further information regarding nominations, voting or to register you attendance please contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899 or email vaada@infoxchange.net.au.</p>
25 September	<p><i>Postnatal depression (panic and anxiety disorders assistance) – TRANX training</i> Held at St Paul's Lutheran Community Centre, 711 Station St, Box Hill, Lynne Little, Psychologist at PADA will help increase health practitioner's understanding of postnatal depression, define and describe the symptoms and provide strategies for practitioners to assist their clients with postnatal depression. Held between 9.30-1.00. Cost \$55+GST. To register contact TRANX on 9886 0955.</p>
Advanced Notice: 1 & 2 December	<p><i>2003 VAADA Annual Conference – The long term fix: what is the future of the drug sector in Victoria?</i> VAADA will be hosting its 2003 annual conference on Monday the 1st and Tuesday the 2nd of December 2003. Call for abstracts are now available. For further information please refer to the 'Month in Review' section of this newsletter or contact Litsa at VAADA on 9416 0899 or vaada@infoxchange.net.au</p>

If you would like further information regarding events, training or workshops being held in coming months please visit the Department of Human Services 'alcohol and other drugs training course calendar' at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/phd/dts/calendar.htm>.

The site provides information regarding undergraduate, postgraduate, accredited units, short courses, workshops and conferences being held within the AOD sector and is updated regularly.