

VAADA NEWS

VAADA optimistic about drug policy change in 2002

VAADA Meeting with Minister Thwaites

The VAADA Board and Executive Officer met with Minister Thwaites on 13 December 2001.

The meeting signalled the commencement of a strengthened and positive relationship between VAADA and the Government.

VAADA appreciated the willingness of the Minister to actively seek its views on issues of importance to VAADA members and their clients. The meeting involved a wide ranging discussion of VAADA's role, responsibilities and priorities.

VAADA believes that it is now in a strong position to advocate on behalf of the sector and is beginning to work collaboratively with Government and the Department of Human Services (DHS) on projects of mutual significance.

VAADA Priorities for 2002

VAADA has worked hard in recent months to establish its place as a strong and proactive advocate for its members.

The organisation has developed a set of draft informing policy principles to guide its work. The development of draft action and media/communications plans will also inform VAADA's involvement in a number of strategic drug policy areas. Priority activities for the first half of this year include:

- The development and strengthening of broad member consultation mechanisms eg website/listserv, *VAADA News*, member forums etc.
- Establishing formal links with government, the bureaucracy and other policy bodies
- Ensuring VAADA representation and input into key strategic policy initiatives eg episodes of care review
- Policy responses in identified strategic areas including workforce development, service user participation and service system development
- Promotion of VAADA's positions and activities to its members and the broader community through the media and relevant forums
- Special projects including Drug Action Week, VAADA conferences etc.

In all of these activities, VAADA will be seeking to improve and expand Victoria's response to people experiencing drug problems. VAADA looks forward to working with our members in all of these activities.

VAADA's New Executive Officer

Following an extensive selection process, VAADA is pleased to formally announce that Carol Bennett has been appointed as Executive Officer.

Prior to her appointment, Carol worked for six months in a consultancy capacity as Acting Executive Officer. Carol is looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that face VAADA as it undergoes a period of significant growth and change.

Where does prevention end and treatment begin?

VAADA thanks all those who attended our *Where does Prevention End and Treatment Begin?* conference, particularly those who presented papers or workshops.

Evaluation feedback indicates that over 80% of participants found the conference to be a very worthwhile experience. Participants also commented on the high calibre of plenary speakers.

An important message that came through loud and clear from the evaluation is that members want VAADA to be a strong advocate for the sector. In particular, they want to see VAADA build a strong media presence, conduct member forums and create other mechanisms to enable members to input into policy directions taken by VAADA.

VAADA was extremely pleased with the level of interaction and participation in the conference and will work towards a bigger and better conference in 2002!

Media Releases

Peak Drug Body Welcomes Drug Money

7 December 2001

Additional Commonwealth funding for drugs announced today by the new Federal Health Minister, Kay Patterson, was given the thumbs up by Victoria's peak drug and alcohol body, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA).

VAADA President, Neos Zavrou, commended the Commonwealth Government for its preparedness to commit further funding to drug prevention and treatment. *"This funding is a welcome relief and demonstrates a real commitment to addressing drug problems beyond the rhetoric of a federal election campaign"*.

VAADA has highlighted the importance of a sustained effort to provide treatment to people seeking help to overcome their drug problems.

"People with drug problems in Victoria have already benefited from the Commonwealth's commitment to funding extra treatment places. Many agencies already provided with funding will now be able to continue to work with people needing treatment. Many others will now also be able to offer services that they previously weren't funded to provide" Mr Zavrou said.

The initiatives announced today include:

- \$60 million over four years for treatment places
- \$14 million new funding over four years to fund community partnership programs
- \$27 million for retractable needle and syringe technology
- \$1 million for the annual *Croc Festival*

"VAADA looks forward to an opportunity to work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure that this funding is allocated to quality programs in Victoria" said VAADA's Executive Officer, Carol Bennett.

A Christmas message about drugs

"Do as I say, not as I do!"

20 December 2001

"Christmas is the peak time for real drug education of young people. It is also the peak time for drug-related accidents and violence. It's up to us as adults to set an example in the way that we choose to use drugs and alcohol over the Christmas/New Year period," said Neos Zavrou, President of the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA).

Statistics show that Christmas is the peak period for drug related harm in the community, including drug related crime, violence, and hospital admissions.

"We know that many of our young people cannot distinguish between drinking and getting drunk. This lack of understanding about drinking is partly a reflection of the way that we as adults choose to use drugs and alcohol in celebrating events like Christmas and New Year," Mr Zavrou said.

VAADA added its support to the police crack down on drink/drug driving over the Christmas New Year period, but reminded people that *just because you're not driving, doesn't mean it's a good idea to get drunk*. VAADA also acknowledged recent Victorian Government measures including the new school drug prevention initiative as well as an extension of a Government media campaign targeting young people.

Mr Zavrou suggested, *"While these new government initiatives may have a positive impact, the reality is that young people learn about drugs every time they see drugs being used by adults."*

VAADA Executive Officer, Carol Bennett emphasised that VAADA was not being a Christmas cheer kill joy. *"VAADA would like all Victorians to have a very safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year. We would also like to remind adults that they are role models, and to think about the lessons they are teaching children about drug use, celebration, Christmas and New Year."*

(NB. VAADA would like to encourage those people who may have been thinking about changing their patterns of drug use, and may need help, to make that first phone call to Direct Line on 9416 1818.)

Your Say

The need for an inclusive Victorian research strategy

I was disappointed last year to hear that a therapeutic service model was being established in NSW with Swedish drug and alcohol workers. There did not seem to be any substantive research behind the decision to import foreign workers at the expense of local expertise. In some ways, this reflects a broader picture in the gulf that exists between services and research.

Late in 2000 the Victorian Public Health Research and Education Council (VPHREC) convened a workshop of drug and alcohol researchers that produced a report which documented the range of research activities in the Victorian Drug and Alcohol sector. VPHREC supported by the department of Human Services noted the need to get a better picture of the research activities in the drug and alcohol sector. The report is available from VPHREC. There were some important insights gained at that meeting such as the need for more research into rural drug and alcohol consumption and research into policing. It was apparent that in addition to the gaps in our research knowledge, a more pressing gap was the absence of a Victorian drug and alcohol research strategy. In spite of the comprehensive work of the Drug Policy Expert Committee (DPEC) in 2001, there is still no strategy that gives direction to Drug and Alcohol research in Victoria.

More importantly, there is a problem with communication between different parts of the sector. Currently there is little capacity for consumers, services and workers to share and develop ideas for research activities. On a regular basis, service providers, researchers and service consumers need to meet to develop research priorities in consultation with Government. Currently, it is unclear how research priorities are established. It is also unclear how priorities are set through consultation between experts, service providers, and service consumers.

Research is expensive, and there are limited resources. Service providers and service consumers have a lot to contribute to setting agendas for research. It is time for us all to consider how best to come together with Government on how to spend our research dollars in a manner that can include service consumers in decision making, assist services and continue to make Victoria a national leader in drug and alcohol research.

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DHS Funded Agency Partnership Project

In many areas, there is growing acceptance of the importance of community involvement in the development of social policy and service delivery. The Victorian Government seeks to redevelop its mechanisms for community sector involvement in service provision and policy development with the aim of achieving better health and welfare outcomes for clients and the wider Victorian Community.

The Government has stated its intention to adopt a partnership and cooperative approach to the funding of community services.

The Department of Human Services acknowledges the need to develop a process that involves more than a 'purchaser-provider' dynamic to one that is characterised by partnership and interdependence.

The Department of Human Services has proposed three inter-related initiatives which include: the development of a partnership statement outlining values and principles as well as respective roles and responsibilities; a DHS wide consultative forum; and an annual funded agency satisfaction survey.

These initiatives will be developed by the Funded Agency Partnership Project working group, comprising DHS and funded agency/peak body representation as well as a representative from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

VAADA will be involved in the Funded Agency Partnership Project. As the project evolves we will keep members informed about progress and any outcomes which are likely to affect Victoria's drug and alcohol sector.

Looking for information on the new privacy legislation?

The Information Privacy Act 2000 (Victoria) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Victoria) took effect 1 September 2001. Compliance by agencies with the new legislation is required by 2002. For more information about the legislation and how it might affect your agency, have a look at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/privacy

Drug Action Week 24 -29 June 2002

Drug Action Week (DAW) creates an opportunity for the sector to celebrate and promote the valuable and successful work being done in the field.

By being positive and proactive in the public arena, DAW aims to promote the value of work done in the area and seeks to minimise many of the fears and misconceptions that hinder progress towards reducing drug related harm.

National planning is now underway for DAW 2002. Once again VAADA will co-ordinate the involvement of Victoria's drug and alcohol sector. Carol Bennett will represent VAADA on ADCA's national steering committee for DAW.

The following theme days have been established:

Mon 24	Prevention
Tue 25	Treatment
Wed 26	Young People
Thur 27	Indigenous Issues
Fri 28	Drugs and the Law
Sat 29	Drugs and the Media

Perhaps the most successful of VAADA's DAW activities last year involved inviting Victoria's State and Federal politicians to visit local drug and alcohol agencies. VAADA looks forward to hosting a series of Victorian initiatives to promote our sector's work.

More details on DAW can be obtained from Lindi at VAADA.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

8 February	1:00 - 4:30 PM. The first of Turning Point's 'Talking Point' Seminars for 2002: <i>Women and Drugs</i> , a panel of speakers chaired by Professor Margaret Hamilton. Call 8413 8413 to book a place or for information on the seminar series.
17 - 22 February	World Federation of Therapeutic Communities 21st World Conference, Crest Hotel, Melbourne www.mcigroup.com/wftc.htm
15 March	1:00 - 2:00 PM. The second of Turning Point's 'Talking Point' Seminars, <i>Outreach - More than a Walk in the Park</i> . Call 8413 8413 to book a place or for information on the seminar series.
25 - 27 March	3rd Australasian Conference on Hepatitis C, Hilton on the Park, Melbourne, Australia, www.hepc.conf.au
28 April - 5 May	5th WONCA World Conference on Rural Health, <i>Working together : communities, professionals and services</i> . Melbourne Convention Centre, Victoria www.ruralhealth2002.net
1 May - 3 May	2nd Workforce Development Conference, <i>Catching Clouds : Exploring Diversity in Workforce Development in the Alcohol and other Drugs Field</i> hosted by NCETA, ALAC (N.Z.), ADAC, Turning Point (Vic), NSW Health, & Commonwealth Dept. Health & Ageing, Hilton International Hotel, Adelaide www.nceta.flinders.edu.au/symposium2002.htm
7 - 9 May	2nd Australasian Conference on Drugs Strategy (incorporating the Inaugural South East Asian Prevention Symposium) <i>Beyond Enforcement : Policing, Prevention, Innovation</i> . Hosted by the Western Australia Police Service, Hyatt Regency, Perth. www.adcuwa.org
9 - 10 May	15th Annual Conference Drug & Alcohol Nurses of Australasia, Avillion Hotel, Sydney, NSW www.danaonline.org
24 - 29 June	Drug Action Week - A national week of action promoting drug and alcohol treatment and prevention. Contact Lindi at VAADA to get involved.