



## Focussing on everyday drugs and everyday problems

Proving the relevance of our upcoming conference *'Everyday Drugs, Everyday Problems: tackling alcohol and other legal drugs,'* this month VAADA has generated and responded to an unprecedented level of media around the issues of alcohol consumption and chronicling.

### **Bingeing on alcohol – and milk?**

At the beginning of September, the Salvation Army released a report into teenage binge drinking which demonstrated that binge drinking for both young males and females had reached epidemic proportions.

Carol Bennett conducted numerous media interviews on the release of the report. Carol pointed to the acceptance of alcohol consumption in Australian society, and particularly in sporting groups, as a contributor to excessive alcohol consumption by young people. The report is available at: [http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/reports/alcohol\\_awareness\\_survey2002.pdf](http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/reports/alcohol_awareness_survey2002.pdf)

On a similar theme, there was widespread media and public interest in the attempts by a Shepparton-based company, Wicked Holdings, to be allowed to sell flavoured alcoholic milk with a higher alcohol content than most standard beers.

VAADA joined Premier Steve Bracks, ADCA, the Australian Drug Foundation and the Salvation Army, amongst others, in condemning the proposed product as encouraging alcohol use and misuse, and as being targeted at the youth market. Carol Bennett said in an interview with ABC Radio:

"... this is a Big M flavoured milk with more alcohol than full-strength beer, I mean who do they think they're kidding ..."

In response to the extensive media and public interest generated on the issue, Premier Bracks indicated that he would look at changing the law to stop the sale of milk-based alcoholic drinks if the company behind 'Moo Joose', Wicked Holdings, succeeded in their appeal to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

VAADA congratulates the premier on taking this stand and reducing the incentive for under age binge drinking amongst young people.

### **Keeping VSU on the agenda**

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Victorian Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee released the report of their Inquiry into the Inhalation of Volatile Substances. VAADA welcomed many of the Inquiry's recommendations, particularly those related to providing treatment and support to those who chronically chrome. Unfortunately, much of the focus was on just one aspect of the report – increasing police powers – over other recommendations.

VAADA also stated that there was a clear need for government to commit to action in addressing this issue rather than just forming another committee to examine the options or develop guidelines. In responding to an article by Andrew Bolt in the Herald Sun (17<sup>th</sup> September) Carol Bennett said "If we are serious about helping these kids overcome their drug problem, then governments need to direct resources to treatment. If we continue to fail these kids, they in turn will continue to risk their own health and safety as well as that of our community." VAADA's views received wide media exposure.

This very comprehensive report is well worth the read. It is available at:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/dcpc/default.htm>

## September in Review

### **Annual Conference**

It has been pleasing to see an increasing public and policy focus on legal drugs in recent times. VAADA's annual conference (2&3 December 2002, Melbourne) will explore legal drug policy issues from a sector perspective. Keynote speakers will include:

- Ms Patricia Faulkner, Secretary, Department of Human Services
- Ms Geraldine Moses, Founder and Executive Officer, Queensland Medication Help Line
- Mr Brian Kearney, Director, Liquor Licensing Victoria
- Mr Todd Harper, Executive Director, QUIT
- Dr Jack Warhaft, Victorian Doctors' Health Program

A detailed program for the conference will be available shortly.

### **VAADA's Key Election Issues Statement**

VAADA has recently completed a summary of the key issues facing the alcohol and drug sector in Victoria leading into the state election. The five key issues are:

- sustainable funding for non government alcohol and drug agencies
- intensive specialist support for complex clients
- workforce development for the alcohol and drug sector
- translating research into an effective tool for alcohol and drug workers
- recognising that treatment is better value for money than imprisonment in addressing alcohol and drug issues.

The summary will be distributed to all politicians in Victoria and is available from Amanda at VAADA.

### **Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Crime**

VAADA presented evidence at the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry, '*Crime in the Community: victims, offenders, and fear of crime*'. VAADA's evidence was based on its report, '*Tough on Crime versus Drug Treatment*'. The major point made by VAADA was that Victoria's prison population is rising

faster than any other state or Territory and that there is a clear need for alternatives to prison for people committing minor drug related offences.

If you would like a copy of Hansard, contact Amanda at VAADA.

### **Episodes of Care Review**

VAADA has provided comments on the draft final report for the review of episodes of care.

VAADA acknowledges that the review has identified the principal concerns surrounding the current episodes of care concept. The challenge will be the capacity to create a model that appropriately values non episodes of care activity in some way.

VAADA will keep members informed of further developments on the outcomes of the review and VAADA's position on this issue.

### **Southern Metropolitan Region Mapping Project**

VAADA is working with the DHS Southern Metropolitan Region to create a directory of drug and alcohol services in the region. The directory will be designed as a useful tool for health workers and others in the field and is due for release in December. If you would like to be included in the directory please contact Amanda.

### **Corrections Conference**

VAADA has had some initial discussions with the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner about the possibility of holding a forum on corrections covering the implications of current policy and management for people with drug related problems.

The forum is intended to provide an opportunity for the sector to hear first hand from corrections and treatment experts, as well as the chance to have a say about current practice and directions in this area for people with drug problems.

If you would be interested in attending a forum (to be held in late November) please contact us. We are also seeking some feedback from likely participants about topics of interest. Issues that may be covered include the Corrections Long Term Management Strategy, an overview of the Victorian prison system, the new Prison Drug Strategy and Community Corrections, amongst others.

## My Say: Solutions to Chroming

**Herald Sun**, 18 September 2002, letter by Carol Bennett, VAADA Executive Officer

*[Text in brackets was not printed]*

Andrew Bolt has provided a very interesting perspective on the best ways to manage kids who chrome ("Whiff of cowardice," September 16).

I agree with Andrew that after months of discussion and debate, the idea of setting up more committees to talk about what we need to do is a waste of time. We know what needs to be done, it's now a matter of seeing some real commitment from governments to actually doing it.

At the same time, I disagree with Andrew's proposed 'solution' of banning sales of spray paints for minors for two very important reasons.

Firstly, the legality or illegality of chroming has minimal impact on use. The kids who chronically chrome have a range of underlying problems and issues *[in their lives that have led to their reliance on drugs as a coping mechanism. They don't care about legality. Most kids know that chroming is unpleasant and bad for you, and consequently do not chrome, or if they do, they stop after only using a few times. There is no evidence that the decision to start or stop chroming is any way informed by the legality of chroming.]*

Secondly, banning sales of spray cans to minors will not remove the problem. If supply of one solvent becomes more difficult, kids simply use another solvent. *[The photo accompanying the article in the Herald Sun showed a young man inhaling petrol from a plastic bottle. Banning spray cans will not reduce the availability of petrol and many other readily available solvents. The only place where reducing supply has had a positive impact is in remote communities where substituting aviation gas for petrol has reduced solvent sniffing.]*

The most disappointing side to Andrew's article is his dismissal of intensive treatment as an option for those whose lives are so unrewarding that they rely on solvent sniffing *[to make it worthwhile.]*

*[Whether we as a community like it or not, some kids will use drugs problematically. If we are serious about helping these kids overcome their drug problem then governments need to direct resources to treatment.]* If we continue to fail these kids, they in turn will continue to risk their own health and safety as well as that of our community.

## Quotes of the Month

"There's no point spending millions on a campaign to have the kids say, 'that's a wank.'" Gino Vumbaca, Australian National Council on Drugs, on the Federal Government's \$27 million drugs campaign aimed at youth.

"It is unethical and unscrupulous and we as a community demand from our manufacturers that they make profits in an ethical way." John Dalziel, Salvation Army, on the proposed sale of alcoholic milk.

"I love my milk as well and if I can have it with a splash of booze then it may solve everybody's problem." Stan Zemanek, broadcaster, presenting a different view on the proposed sale of alcoholic milk.

## Calendar of Events

3 October	<p><b><i>Moreland Hall Seminar Series – Legal Issues arising in AOD Work</i></b>                  This seminar will examine legal issues that may arise from the counsellor-client relationship for alcohol and other drug clinicians.                  5.00-6.15pm RSVP Liz Neal 9384 8836; <a href="mailto:lneal@morelandhall.org">lneal@morelandhall.org</a></p>
4 October	<p><b><i>Local Drug Strategies Conference – Behind the Front Page</i></b>                  Dealing with the “Real Issues Relating to Drug use in our Community”, will include a series of interactive. St. Kilda Town Hall. Contact: Glenn Menner, at the Victorian Local Government Association on (03) 9654 0333 or email <a href="mailto:glenn@vlga.org.au">glenn@vlga.org.au</a></p>
11 October	<p><b><i>Talking Point Seminar – Media and the drugs policy agenda: what are the relationships?</i></b>                  John Tebbutt – Media Studies Program, La Trobe University                  1-2pm Turning Point Training Room 142 Gertrude St, Fitzroy. Bookings essential. Ph: 8413 8413</p>
24 October	<p><b><i>Dual Diagnosis Forum – City of Boroondara</i></b>                  Presentations by Northern Nexus Dual Diagnosis Service, Eastern Drug &amp; Alcohol Service and Hawthorn Mental Health Service. Also dramatizations by Playback Theatre Company. 10.00am – 1.30pm                  Contact: Ros Winkler 9278 4715 (Tues – Thurs) <a href="mailto:roswinkler@boroondara.vic.gov.au">roswinkler@boroondara.vic.gov.au</a></p>
30 Oct – 1 Nov	<p><b><i>Australian Therapeutic Communities Association conference</i></b>                  Held in Canberra. Phone: 02 6292 7073 Email: <a href="mailto:conference@adfact.org">conference@adfact.org</a></p>
8 November	<p><b><i>Talking Point Seminar – Full speed ahead: developments in treatment for amphetamine use</i></b>                  Dr Nicole Lee – Senior Clinical Psychologist &amp; Senior Research Fellow, Turning Point                  1-2pm Turning Point Training Room 142 Gertrude St, Fitzroy. Bookings essential. Ph: 8413 8413</p>
11 November	<p><b><i>Yarra Drug and Health Forum</i></b>                  Forum at Collingwood Children's Inner City Farm, with presentations from DHS Northern funded programs. 11th November, 11am till 2pm. St Helliers St Abbotsford. RSVP by 7<sup>th</sup> November to Jo Snow, YD &amp; HF, 9416 2459.</p>
18 – 20 November	<p><b><i>APSAD Alcohol and Drug Conference (incorporating the National Methadone Conference)</i></b>                  The conference will be held in Adelaide and will place equal emphasis on licit and illicit drugs. For further information visit: <a href="http://www.plevin.com.au/APSAD2002">www.plevin.com.au/APSAD2002</a> or phone 08 8379 8222</p>
27 November	<p><b><i>National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre – Annual Symposium</i></b>                  The symposium will focus on focus on new research being carried out at the Centre. Contact Paul Dillon (02) 9385 0226 <a href="mailto:p.dillon@unsw.edu.au">p.dillon@unsw.edu.au</a></p>
2-3 December	<p><b><i>VAADA Annual Conference – Everyday Drugs, Everyday Problems: tackling alcohol and other legal drugs</i></b>                  Call for registrations – contact <a href="mailto:vaada@infoxchange.net.au">vaada@infoxchange.net.au</a> or phone 9416 0899. Venue: Carlton Rydges Hotel, Carlton.</p>

### ‘Everyday Drugs, Everyday Problems’ Conference Pack

VAADA is inviting member agencies to submit brochures, information, research papers or similar for a conference pack for all delegates attending VAADA’s 2002 Conference (2-3 December).  
 Contact Judy on 9416 0899 for details.