



Keeping Alcohol and Drug Issues on the Election Agenda

VAADA has been working hard to keep alcohol and drug issues on the election agenda in a campaign which has featured a very limited number of issues. VAADA is concerned that the major parties have focussed on crime and health issues without acknowledging their links with drug and alcohol related problems. In VAADA's view, the Victorian community have not had the benefit of robust debate about the impact of alcohol and drug issues on our community.

VAADA's Key Election Issues Statement

Prior to the calling of the election, VAADA released its '*Key Election Issues Statement*' which was based around the five key issues which have arisen from our consultation with the alcohol and drug sector.

Election Fact Sheet

VAADA also released a fact sheet documenting government expenditure on AOD. Currently, the total annual State Government expenditure on preventing and treating drug problems in Victoria is approx. \$70 million. This amounts to less than 1.5% of total health expenditure in Victoria and is the equivalent of about \$14 per person per year. If the AOD budget were increased to just 10% of the state revenue generated by gambling taxes (\$100 million under the Community Support Fund) this would increase Victoria's commitment to around \$20 per person per year. And, if \$100 million were invested in drug treatment the community would save \$700 million through reduced crime and other benefits.

Member Campaign Kit

VAADA sent all members a copy of an election campaign kit which provided them with information about how to lobby local candidates and the media on drug and alcohol issues in the

lead up to the election. The kit was not only designed to ensure that alcohol and drug issues remained on the election agenda but also to assist the sector to establish relationships with the media and local candidates which will continue to be important well beyond the election campaign.

Survey of Politicians

VAADA wrote to health, justice/police and community services spokespeople for all major parties and asked them three questions about their party's policies on resourcing the alcohol and drug sector:

1. Do you support allocating 10% of gambling taxes collected through the Community Support Fund to an increase in funding for the alcohol and drug sector?
2. Will you allocate additional expenditure to a systematic and well resourced program of workforce development and minimum pay and conditions to ensure that the alcohol and drug sector is able to provide quality services to people with drug and alcohol problems in our community?
3. Will you allocate additional expenditure to strengthening intensive community based drug treatment options, in preference to custodial sentences for minor drug related offenders who have drug problems?

Responses were received from the Greens, the Democrats and the National Party. At the time of print VAADA had not yet received responses from the Labor or Liberal parties. VAADA hopes that the elected government will acknowledge the importance of alcohol and drug issues by adequately resourcing the sector to respond to alcohol and other drug problems in our community. All election material is located at the VAADA website: www.vaada.org.au

November in Review

Victorian Election Media

VAADA issued several media releases in the lead up to the election. In response to the National Party's policy launch relating to building a prison especially for drug related offenders, VAADA issued a release which clearly stated that 'drug prisons' were not the answer and called for a realistic debate on the issue and a public commitment by government to providing intensive community based drug treatment services.

VAADA's second election media release '*600 Vs 1000 new police - Are the major parties off drugs?*' called on the major parties to 'get serious about crime and drugs in the lead up to the State election. VAADA Executive Officer, Carol Bennett, said 'It seems the reduced number of heroin deaths has lulled both major parties into a false belief that there are no drug problems in Victoria. This couldn't be further from the case'.

VAADA conference

Registrations for the VAADA 2002 Conference '*Everyday Drugs Everyday Problems*' from December 2 – 3 have been arriving in a steady stream. We look forward to seeing many of you there for what promises to be an interesting and topical conference. We also look forward to an enjoyable evening with registrants at the Conference Dinner on Monday 2 December.

National CPI Initiative Grants Advisory Committee

Carol Bennett has been invited to join the National Community Partnerships Initiative Grants Advisory Committee. The Community Partnerships Initiative is a federally funded grants program for community based organisations who are undertaking primary prevention projects with young people. The call for grant applicants will be made shortly, and assessed by the advisory committee early in 2003.

APSAD Presentation

Carol Bennett gave a presentation entitled '*Chroming Beyond the Headlines: The Implications of the Political and Media debate*

about 'Chroming' at the Australian Professional Society on Alcohol and Drugs Conference in Adelaide. Carol will also give this presentation at VAADA's Annual Conference.

Awards in the Sector

Hugh Mackinnon, Chairman of Oxford Houses Australia, recently attended the Oxford House convention in Seattle Washington where he was presented with the Tom Fellows annual award.

This award is presented each year in recognition of outstanding contribution to the overall Oxford House recovery resource and recognises the success of Oxford Houses Australia and the contribution made by Hugh to that success. Congratulations Hugh – well deserved!

Geraldine Moses, one of the speakers at VAADA's Annual Conference, '*Everyday Drugs, Everyday Problems: tackling alcohol and other legal drugs*' was recently awarded the 2002 Pharmacist of the Year award.

Ms Moses' role in the development of the Queensland Medication Helpline (Australia's first public access medicines information hotline) was pivotal. An outstanding contributor to the education of the general public on medicines and health, Ms Moses makes frequent appearances on radio and television. Her contribution to the ongoing education of pharmacists is also significant, with numerous engagements as a speaker at national and international meetings and conferences.

VAADA Corrections Forum

The Corrections Forum which was originally planned for the 4th of December has been postponed due to election caretaker conventions. The date for the new forum is Wednesday the 19th of February. Confirmation of venue and program will be available soon. Watch this space!

Your Say

Trevor King, Turning Point and VAADA Board Member

'What is Workforce Development?'

When the conversation turns to workforce development it's worth asking at the outset what we mean by the term. You'll be surprised by the number of people who have simply substituted this term for what they previously referred to as education and training. While education and training has its place within workforce development, it is also a whole lot more besides. As I'm yet to find an adequate definition I'd prefer to ask the following question: "What workforce strategies do we need to put in place to improve our prevention, treatment and support efforts and ensure the best possible outcomes for our clients?"

I encourage people to think about strategies that relate to the relationships between individual workers, the organisations in which they work and the broader service sector. This big-picture approach may seem a little overwhelming – where do we start? If our focus is too narrow, for example limited to education and training strategies, we're unlikely to make significant inroads. They are strategies you might use to increase worker knowledge and skills, but you'll be disappointed if you think that this approach on its own will routinely result in significant, enduring practice changes. If it were that simple you would see a lot of behavioural and organisational psychologists on the golf course!

Workforce development is a multi-faceted process that requires strategic planning and long-term investment. We need to know a lot more about the current workforce: who is involved in drug and alcohol work? In what settings do they work? What is the nature of their involvement? What connections do they have with other providers? What career opportunities are available to them? What are the rewards or incentives for doing this work? What barriers constrain their work? What education and training have they received and what do they need? What do we know about practice quality? Implied in this list of questions is a view that the workforce consists of more than what we often refer to as the 'specialist' sector. It includes workers in settings where drug and alcohol prevalence is high and/or concerning and where role legitimacy exists (they and the community expect them to respond).

We also need to predict what the workforce will need to look like at least five years from now. This will require analysis or predictions of social changes, drug use trends and associated morbidity. It also requires

some thinking about how approaches to prevention and treatment may change. These considerations would form the basis of a workforce planning model, incorporating strategies for recruitment, retention and development. Along with this, we also need to consider the relationships between individual workers, organisations and broader systems. ***A workforce development model that doesn't attend to each of these levels will be compromised.***

System issues include the need for leadership (or championship) to support professional practice in drug and alcohol work. Workforce development needs to be given higher priority at funding time (and not just for routine education and training) and we all need to advocate strongly to achieve this end. Consistent application of policy, and greater coordination of effort within and across government and the wider service system would provide a more solid foundation for drug and alcohol work. Funding support is required to further improve service quality – for things such as agency accreditation, development of professional practice codes and guidelines, incentives for the provision of services of demonstrated efficacy. Other necessary strategies relate to engagement – engaging other sectors, peak and professional bodies, service providers and service consumers in policy and planning processes, research programs and the development of education and training initiatives.

At an organisational level the emphasis needs to be placed on developing the culture and supports necessary to foster quality drug and alcohol work. At an individual level most strategies will relate to recruitment, retention and ongoing professional development. Drug and alcohol work marketing will be required, improvement in salary and conditions is necessary and the development of career pathways will also be important. Mechanisms to support ongoing professional development are critical. The industry must be more vocal about any education and training courses that don't provide reasonable preparation for drug and alcohol work or ongoing competence development and recognition.

There are some challenges here for all of us. Some of the issues were around when I entered the field over twenty years ago. ***But I'm confident that a comprehensive five-year workforce plan developed collaboratively will quickly show return on investment.***

Calendar of Events

2-3 December	<p><i>VAADA Conference – Everyday Drugs, Everyday Problems : tackling alcohol and other legal drugs</i></p> <p>Contact vaada@infoxchange.net.au or phone 9416 0899. Venue: Carlton Rydges Hotel, Carlton.</p>
3, 4-5 and 10-11 December	<p><i>Northern Group Training - Sessions include: Orientation to Alcohol and other Drugs Sector, Work with Clients who have Alcohol and/or other Drugs Issues, Provide Alcohol and/or Other Drug Withdrawal Services</i></p> <p>Contact Northern Group training for details of each training component. Northern Group Training Events offer flexible dates and timing according to need. NGT has been contracted by the Victorian Government to deliver subsidised training for Drug & Alcohol workers who are interested in professional development and up-skilling their existing skills. Ph: 9686 7944 Fax: 9686 1755</p>
4 December	<p><i>Pharmacotherapies Training Project – Turning Point</i></p> <p>One day seminar, from 9.30 – 4. Sundowner Swan Hill 404 – 415 Campbell St Swan Hill. Free. Contact Malcolm Doreian on 8413 8721 to register</p>
5 December	<p><i>“Where To From Here?” National Drug Strategy - Increasing Sector Input</i></p> <p>Thursday 5th December 2002 9.00am to 11.30am (Morning Tea Provided) “Fawkner Room” The Sebel Suites 348 St Kilda Road Melbourne</p> <p>This is an informal session to allow people working in the drug and alcohol field an opportunity to discuss issues with members of the ANCD. RSVP by 26th November 2002 Email ancd@ancd.org.au or Phone 02 6279 1650</p>
11 December	<p><i>Pharmacotherapies Training Project – Turning Point.</i></p> <p>One day seminar, from 9.30 – 4. Wangaratta Gateway, 29 – 37 Ryley St Wangaratta. Free. Contact Malcolm Doreian on 8413 8721 to register.</p>
11 December	<p><i>Alcohol Training Project – Turning Point</i></p> <p>One day seminar from 9.30 – 4.30. John Scott Meeting House, La Trobe University, Bundoora. For more information and registration contact Sandra Roeg (03) 8413 8702 or email sandrar@turningpoint.org.au</p>

New Project Officer at VAADA

VAADA welcomes Litsa Roussakis who commenced work with VAADA at the end of November. Litsa will be working on the VAADA newsletter and website and a range of other projects.

