

## Peaks Campaign on the Price Index

A delegation of the Price Index Working Group (PIWG), formed by representatives of the Community Services Organisations (CSO) Peaks Network, met with relevant Ministerial staff during the week ending 26 August 2006, to discuss price indexation for Non Government Organisations (NGOs). The outcome from this meeting is that Government has offered a 3.1 % increase to NGO indexation. The PIWG has agreed to accept this offer.

The indexation is made up of a 3% increase for funding of wages (which cover 85% of funding) while a 2.5% increase will apply to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (which applies to the remaining 15% of funds). This equates to an overall indexation of 2.9%. The amount will be topped up with an extra 0.2% (\$2m per year) from DHS, and will apply to the life of the three year agreement only. There are no additional accountability requirements for the DHS top-up.

The level of indexation offered applies to the 06-07 period and is the minimum amount that would be offered for the 07-08 and 08-09 periods.

In addition, any increase in CPI would flow through to the 15% of funds attached to the 'non-wages' component of the index. No agreements have been made to account for changes in government wages policy during the life of this next three year agreement. Should wages policy change – new negotiations would need to take place to renegotiate the wages component of the indexation to cover wage increases.

Please note that the original negotiations undertaken by the PIWG were predicated on a labour price index (LPI), which during October 2005 was measured at 4.4%. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicate that the LPI for the 05-06 financial year is running at slightly over 3%.

So while the Government won't agree to peg to the LPI, nor to funding government wage outcomes, the final result is closer to the PIWG request.

Formal confirmation from Minister Garbutt is expected soon.

## VAADA Regional Voices Summaries

Summaries from the VAADA Regional Voices series of consultations, conducted earlier this year, are now available at the VAADA website.

The regions covered in the summaries include;

Barwon Southwest Region; Loddon Mallee Region; East Metro; North Metro Region; Gippsland Region; South Metro Region; Grampians Region; West Metro Region; and Hume Region.

Some of the consistent themes that presented in the regional consultations were:

- Need for funding reform that replaces EOCs with more flexible and responsive output measure
- Need for DHS to take a leadership role in the development of coordinated, system-wide, and inter-sectoral partnerships;
- Need for improved access to regional specialist worker positions
- Need for greater focus on workforce development and sustainability
- Need to address access to healthcare issues for AOD clients through exploration of additional incentives and supports to GPs and pharmacists
- Need to improve transitional pathways between, and access to withdrawal and residential rehabilitation

The summaries can be found at:  
<http://www.vaada.org.au/news/events.shtml>

## Month in Review

### **Draft CCS Drug Strategy**

VAADA's submission to the Department of Justice's (DoJ) Draft Community Correction Services (CCS) Drug Strategy is now available on the VAADA website.

The submission came out of the work undertaken by the Prisons Reference Group (PRG), which VAADA convened in March 2006.

The key focus of the PRG was to examine the DoJ evaluation of the Victorian Prison Drug Strategy (VPDS) and Opioid Substitution Therapy Program (OSTP) and contribute to the development of a draft CCS Drug Strategy. The report is available at [www.vaada.org.au](http://www.vaada.org.au)

### **DCPC Misuse of Pharmaceutical Drugs interim report**

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's (DCPC) "Inquiry Into Misuse / Abuse of Benzodiazepines and Other Pharmaceutical Drugs" interim report has been released.

The inquiry was undertaken after expressions of concern from a range of community members, both individuals and professional organisations, around the harms associated with the misuse of pharmaceutical drugs. Another factor that contributed to the instigation of the report was the Coroner's identification of benzodiazepines and other pharmaceuticals, in a significant proportion of drug related deaths.

In recognising the complexity of the issues surrounding pharmaceutical drug misuse, the DCPC recommended that further investigation take place, with the aim of producing a final report. One issue that the committee identified as requiring further investigation is capturing what skills are required by health professionals and pharmacists, to respond effectively to pharmaceutical misuse

Some of the issues highlighted in the report are:

#### **The need to manage the tension between the benefits and costs of the use and misuse of benzodiazepines and other forms of pharmaceutical drugs**

The report recognises that any future interventions, aimed at lessening the harms caused by pharmaceutical misuse, should guard against impacting negatively on those who use these drugs for legitimate therapeutic purposes.

#### **The need to inform the broad community and patients about the risks of pharmaceutical misuse**

The report acknowledges that a major impediment to effective community interventions, which address pharmaceutical misuse, is the misperception that being dependant on pharmaceutical drugs is inherently less harmful than being dependant on illicit drugs.

#### **The need to consider drug formulations that may reduce the risk of diversion and issue**

The report notes that the efficacy of such medications as naloxone should be "reviewed and carefully monitored". It adds, that within the United States, there have been calls for other narcotic analgesics which are open to diversion, to be managed in the same way. It highlights that this isn't a cure all for drug diversion; it will lessen demand for such narcotics, rather than stop it.

#### **The need for a range of harm reduction strategies**

The report is realistic in its appraisal that regardless of what measures government may take in relation to pharmaceutical drug misuse, there will still be diversion and misuse issues. It notes that in light of this, it is important to implement measures that reduce the harms associated with such actions. It adds that current harm reduction measures should be reviewed in relation to pharmaceutical drug misuse, and to address gaps where particular groups may not identify current harm reduction measures as relevant to their needs.

#### **The need to review access to treatment**

Several submissions to the DCPC highlighted issues that limit access to treatment, including waiting lists and limited operating hours for services. The report comments that a review is required to ascertain the treatment needs of specific groups, including: Young people; Parents; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups; Rural and regional Victorians; Prisoners; Older Victorians; Indigenous Australians; and People in the workplace

#### **The need for more research**

The report acknowledges that there are gaps in the evidence base that need to be addressed. Some of these gaps include: Knowledge about prevalence and misuse; Risk and protective factors for pharmaceutical misuse; The most effective information and monitoring systems; and The most effective treatment for those who misuse pharmaceuticals.

## YOUR SAY

### Spreading it around...

#### Jean Wyldbore - Chair – 2006 Rural Victorian Alcohol & Drug Conference

This year's Rural Victorian Alcohol & Drug Conference (August, Warrnambool) was by-lined 'Make it Happen'. And make it happen we did! A range of speakers covering topics as diverse as the growing use of amphetamines, State's perspective on policy, young people and dual diagnoses, staff recruitment and retention, consumer views, programs for indigenous youth, caring for staff, to mention just a few - all brought new research, new perspectives and new models for agency and community practice.

Something else that was new was the request to delegates to suggest a different regional venue for next year's Conference. We received a number of suggestions – all polite – and will be considering each in Committee over the coming weeks.

However, there was a corresponding question from some delegates: "Why?"

So here's some of the answer.

What started as a small local South West Vic meeting for alcohol and drug treatment providers and associated agencies some seven years ago, has grown into a genuine state-wide conference for AoD agencies, health providers at all levels, police, the judiciary, the community, social welfare, governments, practitioners and AoD-service users. It's a unique and valuable mix.

Conference participants all have one factor which is common and exclusive to us – we are rural and regional, or have specific interests in and concerns with rural and regional areas and AoD issues in those areas. There are other AoD meetings, but there is no other conference or professional meeting like this – focussing on developing and attaining best practice within the structural and funding constraints imposed on rural agencies, and affecting policy accordingly.

'Time, distance dollars' – the mantra of the rural AoD sector. Our clients often face extraordinary difficulties compared with those of their urban peers. Funding from governments is based on the same formulae though – population numbers and episodes of care or courses of treatment – and doesn't recognise the particular issues that non-metro and non-suburban settings and communities face.

Some say it is only fair that all Victorians have a 'level playing field' when it comes to service.

Very democratic, and to be applauded for that. It doesn't actually happen that way though, does it? It doesn't reflect life in the country: far fewer treatment places, far fewer people in the AoD workforce, far fewer treatment centres and options. Less public transport (if any, in some areas), social isolation, social stigma in rural communities, a lack of community understanding of AoD harms and the real import of living with addiction.

For rural agencies, there is little or no backfill cash for workers accessing PD, and there are no formal or structured programs or funding for local drug strategies, community education, alcohol plans or even related research.

So we are going to start 'walking the talk'. From 2007, we will endeavour to take the Rural Victorian Alcohol & Drug Conference to other regions in Victoria, at the invitation of those communities, to recognise the good and often extraordinary work that is happening 'out there', beyond the end of the tramlines. We also aim to organise a range of Conference Satellites around the State, all associated with the Conference, and running throughout the year.

Further, we will endeavour to ensure that this Conference rigorously advocates for, and is an activist force in, the sector throughout the year. In its turn, this activity will complement VAADA's position as a true representative of the whole sector.

Is it all a bit ambitious? Certainly not. Surely the 30% of the State's population who reside outside metro Melbourne deserve optimum services too? Isn't it time we got our act together and made sure that we have a strong rural voice, advocating for policy and funding which acknowledges and recognises the increasing difficulties facing many rural communities?

So it's off to other places in rural and regional Victoria. Doesn't mean we won't come back to the South West, which has been good to the Conference and good for the sector, but it's time to make it happen for our colleagues, friends and clients in the rest of the State. The Conference has grown up and needs to see a bit of the country.

After that – how does the 'Rural **Australian** Drug & Alcohol Conference' sound?

## Calendar of Events

September 8	<p><b><i>Talking Point Seminar - Mental Health Screening and Intervention in Alcohol And Other Drug Services: The Psycheck Project.</i></b> Presented by Dr Nicole Lee. 1-2 pm, 142 Gertrude St, Fitzroy. The seminar is free. All welcome, bookings essential, ring 8413 8413 or email <a href="mailto:info@turningpoint.org.au">info@turningpoint.org.au</a></p>
September 28 – 29	<p><b><i>Australasian Amphetamines Conference, 2006 – ANEX</i></b> Globally amphetamines are the second most popular illicit drug after cannabis. The first Australasian Amphetamine Conference will focus on these questions and more. For more information about attending or presenting at the conference, visit the conference website <a href="http://www.amphetamines.org.au">http://www.amphetamines.org.au</a> or email <a href="mailto:conference@amphetamines.org.au">conference@amphetamines.org.au</a></p>
September 29	<p><b><i>No to Violence (NTV) – Working with Men Who are Violent Towards Family Members – Moreland Hall Seminar Series 12.30 – 1.30pm</i></b> This presentation will focus on working with men to assist them to change and end their violent behaviour against family members. Presented by Tony Kelleher, Senior Community Educator Behavioural change Group facilitator – Life Works. Seminars will be held Moreland Hall, 26 Jessie Street Moreland. For further enquiries please call 03 9386 2876 or email <a href="mailto:seminarseries@moreland hall.org">seminarseries@moreland hall.org</a></p>
September 29	<p><b><i>Working with Children and Young People with an ABI - Department of Human Services</i></b> This workshop will be facilitated by Cathy Bucolo and Ruth Tesselaar (Statewide ABI Paediatric Coordinator) and is an introduction to Paediatric Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). To be held on Friday, 29 September 2006 from 1.00pm to 5.00pm at Hume Global Learning Centre, 1093 Pascoe Vale Rd, Broadmeadows. For enquiries, please call: (03) 9385 6356 or email <a href="mailto:cbucolo@mcm.org.au">cbucolo@mcm.org.au</a> . Registration necessary.</p>
October 10	<p><b><i>Responding to Sexual Assault, Level 2 - CASA House</i></b> This one day workshop will extend the skills of those working with victim/survivors of sexual assault who have completed Responding to Sexual Assault – Level 1 training or have some experience working with victim/survivors. The cost of the workshop will be \$100.00 and limited to 20 places. Attendance is by booking only. Registration forms are available by contacting CASA House on 9347 3066 or go to <a href="http://www.rwh.org.au/casa/">www.rwh.org.au/casa/</a></p>
October 13	<p><b><i>Talking Point Seminar – Alcohol Related Harm Across Victorian Local Government Areas: A Suburb by Suburb, Town by Town Analysis</i></b> Presented by Dr Anne-Marie Laslett. 1-2 pm, 142 Gertrude St, Fitzroy. The seminar is free. All welcome, bookings essential, ring 8413 8413 or email <a href="mailto:info@turningpoint.org.au">info@turningpoint.org.au</a></p>
October 16	<p><b><i>Cognitive Behavioural and Solution-focused Approaches to Working with Anxious and Depressed Young People and their Families</i></b> TRANX /PADA training, 9.30-4.30pm, at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment centre corner St Georges Road and Bell Street, Preston All full day workshops are \$190.00, for more information or to register contact Anne Smarrelli on 9886 0955.</p>
October 20	<p><b><i>Psychological Treatment of Depression: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy as Integral Elements of a Comprehensive Treatment Program</i></b> TRANX /PADA training, 9.30-4.30pm, at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment centre corner St Georges Road and Bell Street, Preston All full day workshops are \$190.00, for more information or to register contact Anne Smarrelli on 9886 0955.</p>
October 27	<p><b><i>The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Clinical Practice: Counteracting the Negative Effects of Compassion Fatigue, Fear and Burn-Out – Moreland Hall Seminar Series 12.30 – 1.30pm</i></b> A narrative seminar highlighting the challenges of providing AOD treatment to adolescents presenting with histories of trauma, abuse and neglect, with particular reference to strategies used to develop ‘resilience. Presented by John Quiroga, Alcohol and Drug Youth Consultant, Moreland Hall. Seminars will be held Moreland Hall, 26 Jessie Street Moreland. For further enquiries please call 03 9386 2876 or email <a href="mailto:seminarseries@moreland hall.org">seminarseries@moreland hall.org</a></p>

***The views expressed by contributors to the VAADA News are not necessarily those held by VAADA.***