



# NEWS

VICTORIAN ALCOHOL & DRUG ASSOCIATION

January - February 2007

ENEWS – daily electronic news, views and drug information  
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## VAADA Priority Setting

VAADA convened a priority setting day on the 25 January 2007, to further discuss findings from the Regional Voices Consultations. These findings were used to select priority areas that would inform VAADA's work and advocacy throughout 2007 (a draft copy of the Regional Voices report will be available at the VAADA Conference, 13 - 14 February 2007).

Other criteria used in selecting the key priority areas included:

- VAADA's capacity to implement strategies to forward a priority issue
- The perceived relevance of an issue to the sector
- The likelihood of improved outcomes for clients and increased sector capacity through the implementation of a key priority area
- The state of knowledge on a particular issue
- Whether advocacy around a particular issue already exists

Three priority areas were identified:

- Service system design
- Partnerships/integration between Alcohol and other drug (AOD) and other sectors
- Resourcing/capacity of the AOD sector

These issues will be used as the themes of the three sector priorities planning workshops to be held at the VAADA conference.

### Service System Design

A key concern consistently aired by participants in the Regional Voices Consultations, related to the gaps that exist in the design of the current service system, which results in inadequate responses to the needs of clients and the community.

Examples of poor client outcomes as a result of these gaps included: The inability of AOD clients to access adequate and appropriate health care; Poor access to pharmacotherapy programs; Lengthy waiting lists; and Unique difficulties in service provision in rural and regional settings.

VAADA seeks to clarify what aspects of the current service system design fall short, and identify solutions that will make the service system more responsive and effective to the interests of its stakeholders.

### Partnerships/Integration between AOD and Other Sectors

This was adopted as a priority issue in response to the identification throughout the consultations of increasingly complex client presenting to services that have multiple needs. Participants noted that complex clients required holistic responses. In an effort to provide such responses, AOD services have engaged in multiple networks, with ever increasing levels of complexity.

Currently services are inadequately resourced to effectively undertake the partnering or integration needed to provide the holistic responses their clients require.

### Resourcing/Capacity of the AOD Sector.

Resourcing/capacity was selected as a priority area because of general shortfalls in AOD sector resources, leading to incomplete service provision and inadequate support for clients. Related problems include a lack of research into what constitutes adequate funding of the sector, workforce development, and limited capacity to support family and carers of AOD clients.

## Month in Review

Problematic funding models, data collection issues, as well as evidential gaps in AOD trends and treatment provision, were identified as other challenges that fell under the Resourcing/Capacity priority area.

Other issues discussed as important to the future of the AOD sector and its stakeholders and encompassed under the priority areas were:

- Access for AOD clients to general health care
- Integrated industry planning
- Support for families and carers
- Partnerships with indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Dual diagnosis

### VAADA Conference 2007

Health for All – Advocating for people who use alcohol and other drugs will be held at The Spring Street Conference Centre on 13 & 14 February 2007.

The “Health for All” Conference has three broad objectives:

- To identify current issues in relation to health inequality (in particular, inequitable access to universal health care) for people experiencing problematic alcohol & other drug use
- To explore strategies for addressing health inequality for people with AOD issues
- To examine current innovative strategies that are being explored in responding to the health needs of people who use alcohol & other drugs.

A key challenge for both consumers and practitioners of the alcohol and other drug sector is the issue of equitable access to healthcare. Issues of stigma and discrimination are significant for people who are currently addressing their drug use or who have a history of drug use. This stigma often contributes to inaccurate perceptions of how people who use alcohol and other drugs will behave and respond to health professionals – and also to perceptions of the degree to which drug users are ‘deserving’ of equitable healthcare.

Good healthcare is critical to preventing chronic disease and health issues related to problematic drug use.

Our overarching goal is to raise awareness of this issue and to work towards decreasing health inequality for this particular population group.

Keynote speakers for the conference include:

- Dr Helen Szoke (Chief Conciliator/CEO, Equal Opportunity Commission)
- Professor Ian Anderson (Director, Onemda, VicHealth Koori Health Unit)
- Mr Richard Eckersley (Visiting Fellow, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University)
- Dr Richard Matthews (Deputy Director-General, NSW Health)
- Kathleen Walsh (Executive Director, Women’s Health in the North)

More information can be found at the conference website [www.vaadaconference.org.au](http://www.vaadaconference.org.au) Ph. 9416 0899 Email: [vaada@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:vaada@infoxchange.net.au).

### Sector Priorities Planning Workshops

VAADA is keen to ensure that the AOD sector has an ongoing opportunity to engage in its priority setting process and to contribute to its advocacy strategy.

At our annual conference on 13 and 14 February 2007, VAADA will hold concurrent workshops on the three identified priority areas:

- Service system design
- Partnerships/integration between Alcohol and other drug (AOD) and other sectors
- Resourcing/capacity of the AOD sector

Conference delegates will be asked to enrol in one of the three workshops on the first day of the conference. Lists will be displayed around the conference centre in prominent locations confirming workshop selections.

These workshops will be conducted by independent facilitators and supported by sector leaders, appointed from the Board at the priority setting session.

Emerging from the Sector Priorities Planning Workshops – VAADA anticipates that three action plans on the priority issues will be developed. VAADA will ensure there are opportunities for ongoing sector participation in these advocacy strategies.

VAADA looks forward to your participation in the workshops and encourages you to consider your potential ongoing involvement.

**YOUR SAY**  
***An Introduction***  
**Sam Biondo - VAADA Locum Executive Officer**

It is with considerable anticipation that I have commenced my work at VAADA, after several terms on the VAADA board, and a very keen interest in the varied work of member agencies in the AOD sector.

I hold the work of member agencies in high respect, given the complex nature of the issues you deal with and the environment in which you operate. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of Janine Bush during her time as VAADA Executive Officer, she will be sadly missed.

Prior to commencing this position I was Community Development Officer at Fitzroy Legal Service for some 18 years, from which I have taken 12 months parental leave. This has allowed me to undertake this short term position at VAADA.

My lengthy period as Community Development Officer at Fitzroy Legal Service has given me a commitment to the community sector and the many marginalised, disadvantaged and often incredible individuals our organisations have dealings with.

My previous background has also involved me in a range of social justice and socio-legal issues - from policing to human rights, young people's issues, publishing, drug issues and law reform.

In the course of my work I have utilised a range of skills including research work, campaigning, lobbying, submission writing, media work and direct advocacy.

I have been on the Boards of the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Consumer Law Centre, Job Watch, St Mary's House of Welcome, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, the Yarra Drug and Health forum, Fitzroy Adventure Playground, and various Victoria Police and Community Committees.

I am a strong believer in the potential of a community voice and the knowledge and skills that rests in the community sector.

Having come from outside the AOD sector, I have much to discover about the key issues confronting member agencies and those who use their services and am eager to hear your views and ideas.

As members may be aware, VAADA has consulted broadly on the issues affecting the sector through its Regional Voices Consultations. These consultations have identified a range of issues which will inform VAADA in its short and longer term horizons.

This activity builds on the work already undertaken to strengthen the organisations strategic planning efforts. The end result of which, is about building a more cohesive, strategically focussed and inclusive sector.

I am committed to making a contribution however small while in the EO role, and believe that a cohesive and articulate AOD sector can improve the lot of those it works for, as well as the community as a whole.

I see great capacity in this sector to broaden its reach and provide a vision of a just society that deals fairly with those impacted on by harmful drug use and other disadvantage.

Inadequate service funding, gaps in service delivery, the politics of change, and the means to achieve progress, require a collective effort which must involve us all. I am a firm believer that there is considerable cross sectoral support for the work of the AOD sector.

The future may see better linkages and collaboration on many issues of mutual concern to the community sector and feel that VAADA can assume a key role in this activity. Better and broader communication is one of the tools which must continue to be harnessed to achieve this end.

Much work has been done over recent times by my immediate predecessor Janine Bush and others within VAADA in identifying the issues which the sector sees as critical. The time ahead will define what we strategically focus on, and how we progress on the issues.

I look forward to playing a role albeit however small during my time at VAADA by building on the efforts of the past and in contributing to the change ahead.

## Calendar of Events

February 2	<p><b><i>Talking Point Seminar – Providing an earlier warning of drug use trends</i></b> Jane Mounteney, Consultant, Bergen Clinics Foundation and Research Fellow, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Bergen, Norway. 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>
February 13 & 14	<p><b><i>VAADA Conference 07 -Health for all: Advocating for people who use alcohol and other drugs</i></b> This year the annual VAADA conference will be held in Melbourne at The Spring Street Conference Centre on 13 and 14 February 2007. The Conference will explore the topic of the health status of people with alcohol &amp; other drug (AOD) issues – and their access to general health services. Some of the issues regarding drugs &amp; health to be explored will include: Access to Rural Healthcare; Interventions in a Hospital Setting; Health in Prisons; Drugs &amp; Families; Cultural Diversity &amp; Treatment Access; Primary Health; Consumer Participation; Homelessness &amp; Health; GPs &amp; Health Access; Injecting Drug Users; and Oral Health Drugs &amp; Families. More Information can be found at <a href="http://www.vaadaconference.org.au">www.vaadaconference.org.au</a> &amp; <a href="http://www.vaada.org.au">www.vaada.org.au</a> in the coming weeks</p>
February 26 & 27	<p><b><i>Thinking Drinking II: From Problems to Solutions</i></b> Presented by the Australian Drug Foundation Thinking Drinking II: From Problems to Solutions is the conference for those wanting to develop solutions to the risky drinking culture in Australasia. It will focus on how to change attitudes, customs and policies in order to create sustainable change. Thinking Drinking II will help set the agenda for changing problematic drinking cultures in Australasia and will determine. Thinking Drinking II is a major meeting for professionals interested in alcohol issues. For more information please go to <a href="http://www.adf.org.au/">http://www.adf.org.au/</a></p>
February 27	<p><b><i>Freedom, Respect, Equality, Dignity: Human Rights Conference</i></b> Presented by the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria. As Victoria becomes the first state to launch a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and marks the 30th anniversary of anti-discrimination legislation, the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria will stage a major conference on human rights on 27 February 2007. The theme for the conference is Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity and it will address the benefits of a Human Rights Charter and the adoption of human rights principles into every day life. For more information: Go to the Equal Opportunity Commission website for more information.</p>
March 21	<p><b><i>Build your clients' self esteem and confidence - TRANX/PADA</i></b> Presented by Tomi Redman. This workshop is designed to demonstrate and discuss how to assist clients build their self-esteem and confidence. A structured program will be outlined, including a description of assertiveness training, conversation skills and anxiety management. Participants will be encouraged to practice their skills through discussion, case studies and group work. The workshop will run from 9.30am to 4.30pm Wednesday 21 March, 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>

### Contributions to “Your Say”

VAADA is seeking contributions for the *Your Say* feature throughout 2006. If you are interested in having your thoughts published and incredibly well read, please email Chris McDonnell at [cmcdonnell@vaada.org.au](mailto:cmcdonnell@vaada.org.au) with a brief description of your chosen topic.

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