

## VAADA AGM

VAADA held its AGM on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November at the VicHealth Building in Carlton.

After welcoming attendees to the AGM, retiring VAADA President - Jenny Blakey, informed the meeting that five nominations had been received for the five vacant Board positions that were due for re-election at the 2007 AGM.

She added that four of the nominations had been received from existing Board members and that the fifth nomination had been lodged by Keith Edwards (Windana).

The five vacant positions are now held by:

- Laurence Alvis (Moreland Hall)
- Kate Harrington O'Brien (Bendigo Community Health Service)
- Simon Ruth (PenDAP)
- Tim Walsh (SEADS)
- Keith Edwards (Windana)

The other four positions are currently held by:

- Kieran Connolly (Turning Point)
- Mike Coleman (Salvation Army)
- Mark Powell (South West Health Care)
- Sharon O'Reilly (Inner South Community Health Service)

Sam Biondo (VAADA Executive Officer) made special thanks to Jenny Blakey who has worked tirelessly in her time as a Board member, and particularly over the last two years in her role as President

VAADA would also like to thank its guest speaker Moira Rayner who gave a fascinating presentation titled "The unique challenges facing the AOD sector in the application of the Victorian Human Rights Charter". Moira's sense of natural justice and passion for human

rights for all (not just for the privileged), was evident to all who heard her presentation.

Some of the points and issues that she raised in relation to the Victorian Human Rights Charter and its application by those who work with the disadvantaged included:

- That the charter is about rights not responsibilities
- That advocates must refrain from value judgments and advocate for the human rights of all
- That the introduction of similar legislation had made a remarkable impact in the UK in protecting some of the most vulnerable members of the UK community
- Decisions made by international judges in relations to human rights issues would now be admissible before courts considering Victorian law
- That not for profit organisations rarely use Human Rights legislation effectively when lobbying for their clients
- That the most vulnerable members of our communities were often those least able to advocate on their own behalf



From left to right: Retiring VAADA President Jenny Blakey with Moira Rayner, Pauline Wright and Bridget Roberts.

## Month in Review

### Submission to the Victorian enquiry ATS and Related Drugs Strategy, 2007- 2010

VAADA's submission to the State Government inquiry, Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) and Related Drugs Strategy, 2007-2010 is built upon submissions VAADA has made to two previous consultations – the 2007 Federal Government ATS inquiry and the 2003 Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Inquiry into Amphetamines and Party Drugs.

VAADA made 17 recommendations in its current submission.

Two strong interrelated themes present within the submission are:

- The need to increase the evidence base around a range of ATS related issues
- That the information/prevention campaigns around ATS need to be grounded in evidence and measured in tone.

The submission noted that there are a number of gaps in the evidence base, including:

- Who uses ATS
- Their motivation for use
- The settings that they use ATS in
- The types of ATS used
- The routes of admission for ATS
- The long term affects of ATS use
- The best treatment modalities for problematic ATS use

The submission highlighted that information about ATS directed at the public needs to be evidence based and devoid of sensationalism or alarmism.

It pointed out that a key element in achieving this aim is ensuring accurate and non-sensationalist reporting by the press about ATS.

The submission highlighted that the information aimed at parents needed to be very clear about what are and aren't the risks associated with ATS use and need to clearly differentiate between problematic and experimental use by young people.

In relation to getting prevention messages to those that use ATS, the submission noted that information providers need to acknowledge

the diverse rather than homogenous nature of ATS users. It added that generic prevention messages risk being ignored by particular subsets of users as not being relevant to them.

For example, while a flat "don't use drugs" messages may work to shore up the views of young people who are disinclined to experimental drug use, but among young people who are contemplating experimenting with drugs, it may well prove alienating. For these people a harm minimisation message may be more engaging and effective.

The submission suggests that effective prevention messages aimed at schoolchildren need to either be discrete campaigns tailored for each group, or if a single campaign is opted for, it will need to incorporate different messages that resonate with each group.

Other recommendations include:

- The extension of the Custodial Health and Alcohol and Drug (CHAD) project to include information packages and referral to ongoing treatment/support for identified problematic ATS users
- More funding and training to make AOD services more accessible to families seeking treatment or support for problematic ATS use.

The full report can be found at:  
<http://www.vaada.org.au>

### VAADA CEO's Meeting

The VAADA member CEOs/Managers Network met at the Mary of the Cross Centre on 3 December 2007.

The meeting established a small working group to progress its work on data collection within the sector and further refined the areas that the project would examine.

There was further discussion around the Cost of Service analysis tool and its rollout to a range of agencies in 2008 and the ways which information collected from it might be used.

The CEO/Mangers meeting will continue throughout 2008 on a monthly basis.

## YOUR SAY

John Francis TSU Project Officer  
'AIVL - Treatment Service Users Project'

*"Involving the community in decision making about their own health, as well as the planning & management of health services is integral to effective health promotion & illness prevention"*

Better Health Outcomes for Australians 1994 Commonwealth Dept. of Human Services & Health.

The 'Treatment Service Users Project' is an exciting and pioneering project funded by the Australian Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing, Drug Strategy Branch. It will be implemented by AIVL (The Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League), a peak national consumer representative organisation, in collaboration with NCHSR (The National Centre in HIV Social Research). It focuses on consumer participation in drug treatment services.

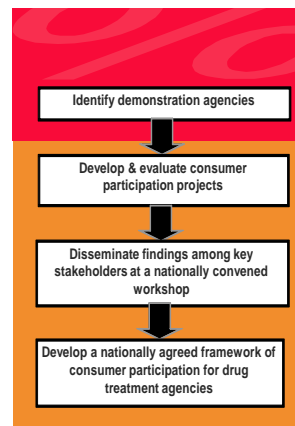
The project has already completed its first phase in which it found that consumer participation has a highly beneficial role to play in the planning & delivery of high quality drug treatment services. Phase 1 also found that while there were currently only relatively low levels of consumer participation across drug treatment services in Australia there was widespread support for moving to higher levels of consumer participation.

Phase 2 of the project will involve the development and evaluation of 5 consumer participation projects in 5 different Drug Treatment Services including government & non-government agencies. These agencies will be located in 3 Australian States/territories – NSW, Victoria and Western Australia and will provide a range of drug treatment services; including pharmacotherapy, detoxification and residential rehabilitation programs. They will be based in metro, regional and rural locations. At the onset of the project a baseline will be established of existing consumer participation activities. After this a model of consumer participation derived from available literature and findings from Phase 1 will be used to evaluate the demonstration projects.

Phase 1 of the project found that there is a significant amount of low level participation occurring in Australia, for example feedback sessions and suggestion boxes. While these consumer participation activities are valuable, phase 2 will focus on the development and evaluation of projects where consumers are

more actively involved in decision making processes, for example staff recruitment, policy working groups and membership of management committees. Phase 1 also identified obstacles in implementing consumer participation such as lack of funds and appropriate expertise. Phase 2 of the project will respond to these obstacles via specific actions, including providing resources to the selected drug treatment agencies so that they have the capacity to develop consumer participation activities, tailored to suit the individual needs of each service.

Through a call for expressions of interest, 5 drug treatment agencies from NSW, Victoria and Western Australia will have the opportunity to apply for funds to develop a demonstration consumer participation project. AIVL along with the local drug user organization which is, VIVAIDS in Victoria will provide assistance to these agencies in developing their applications. The state/territory AOD peak body which is, VAADA in Victoria will play a pivotal role in promoting the project and the criteria for expressions of interest through sector forums and other platforms. At the end of the project term the demonstration projects will be evaluated by the NCHSR & AIVL and the findings disseminated within the sector. A national workshop with participation from key stakeholders will then be

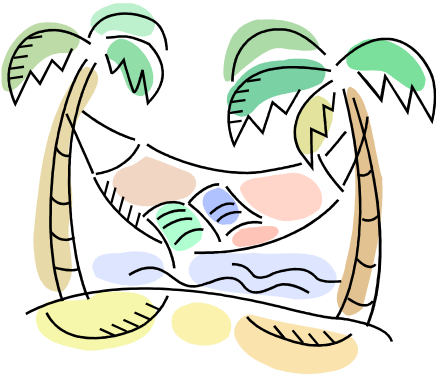


convened and a nationally agreed framework for consumer participation in drug treatment agencies will be developed. Apart from increasing levels of consumer participation in drug treatment agencies the project will also seek to increase the capacity of both consumers and service providers in undertaking consumer participations. It will aim to strengthen partnerships within the sector, improve the quality of drug treatment services and also create more conducive environments for consumer participation.

Regular project updates can be accessed through the AIVL website and e-list, state/territory drug user organization newsletters and state/territory AOD peak body newsletters. John Francis the TSU Project Officer can also be contacted for more information at [johnf@aivl.org.au](mailto:johnf@aivl.org.au).

## Calendar of Events

February 8	<p><b>Talking Point Seminar Series - <i>Fighting the drugs war: The role of prohibitionist groups in Australian illicit drugs policy</i></b> Presented by Dr Phillip Mendes Senior Lecturer, Medicine, Nursing and Health Services, Monash University. Held at the Turning Point Training Room, 142 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy from 1pm to 2pm. Bookings essential: call 03 8413 8413 or email: <a href="mailto:info@turningpoint.org.au">info@turningpoint.org.au</a></p>
Advance Notice February 21 & 22	<p><b><i>Towards a healthy community</i></b> is a 2-day conference being held to celebrate the role and contributions of non-government, not-for-profit organisations in South West Victoria in helping to create a healthy community. Conference speakers will focus upon such issues around alcohol &amp; drug addiction, family violence, mental health and disability as well as issues such as barriers to accessing services, the benefits of collaboration between providers in all sectors. More information registration forms can be found at <a href="http://www.communitysouthwest.com">www.communitysouthwest.com</a> or other enquiries can be redirected to John Coxon at <a href="mailto:jcoxon@aspire.org.au">jcoxon@aspire.org.au</a> .</p>
Advance Notice 3 & 4 April	<p><b><i>Reconnexion - National Conference on Anxiety &amp; Depression. Reconnexion (formerly TRANX/PADA) is holding its 3rd Biennial National Conference on Anxiety &amp; Depression on Thursday 3 &amp; Friday 4 April 2008 at the Melbourne Exhibition &amp; Convention Centre.</i></b> The conference titled 'diverse pathways to effective treatment' has a range of impressive speakers from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Keynote speaker is Professor Paul Salkovskis, Professor of Clinical Psychology and Applied Science at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, Clinical Director at the Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust. Professor Salkovskis is a world renowned expert in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and was recently seen in the ABC series "The House of Obsessive Compulsives". Full cost \$440. Early bird (closes 14 January) and student rates apply. On Saturday 5 April, following the Conference is a One Day Seminar with Professor Paul Salkovskis titled 'CBT for OCD and Health Anxiety (Hypochondriasis): Helping the patient to choose to change'. Full cost for one day \$250. For more information or to register online, visit <a href="http://www.reconnexion.org.au/conference">www.reconnexion.org.au/conference</a> or ring us on 03 9886 9400.</p>



### **SEASON'S GREETINGS!**

**We would like to thank you for your support in 2007 and wish you all the best for a safe and happy festive season.**

**We look forward to working with you in 2008!**

**The Board and Staff of VAADA**

**The VAADA office will be closed from the 22 December 2007 until  
2 January 2008**

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