

Media Release

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600 versus 1,000 new police? Are the major parties off drugs?

The peak body representing the Victorian alcohol and drug sector, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) has called on the major parties to **'get serious about crime and drugs'** in the lead up to the State election.

'If the major parties bothered to look beyond the current election bidding war about getting tough on crime and increasing police numbers, they would know that the most effective way of making the community a safer place is to deal with drug problems' according to Ms Carol Bennett, VAADA Executive Officer.

'We're tired of listening to politicians trivialise the community's understanding of the best ways to reduce crime and increase safety. The community is not stupid. The community knows that most offenders have drug problems. It's about time we saw some real debates and promises about community safety and drug related crime. It's about time the major parties did drugs' said Ms Bennett.

Ms Bennett pointed out that VAADA had already circulated an election position paper detailing some background facts including:

- at least 60% of prisoners have a drug and alcohol problem
- more police and more prison beds do not reduce drug addiction or crime
- drug treatment is a proven way to produce real savings to the community in reduced crime, health costs, stronger families and increased productivity
- community surveys continue to highlight the importance of support for providing drug treatment as a way of reducing drug related crime.

According to Ms Bennett, ***'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'***.

Recent national research indicates that Victoria still trails other states and territories in the provision of some intensive drug treatment services.

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