

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association Annual Report 2024



vaada

Our Vision

A Victorian community in which alcohol and other drug (AOD)-related harms are reduced and well-being is promoted to support people to reach their potential.

Our Purpose

VAADA leads AOD policy, workforce development, and public discussion across membership, related sectors and the community to prevent and reduce AOD harms in Victoria.

Our Values

Collaborative
Professional
Rights-based
Progressive
Evidence-informed



VAADA acknowledges and celebrates people and their families and supporters who have a lived and living experience of alcohol, medication and other drug use.

We value your courage, wisdom and experience, and recognise the important contribution that you make to the AOD sector in Victoria.

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VAADA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work is undertaken. Our office stands on the country of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to all Elders past and present and acknowledge their continuing and ongoing connection to land, waters and sky.

VAADA Board Members



Dr Tamsin Short

President

Board Member since 2018

Tamsin is the Executive Lead of Mental Health and AOD at Access Health and Community.

With 15 years of experience as a clinical and forensic psychologist she has worked in a range of clinical and management roles and has pioneered innovative AOD services, including Victoria's first program for medication misuse.



Clare Davies

Vice President

Board Member since 2022

Clare is the CEO of the Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC), a peer-led organisation supporting those affected by alcohol, drugs and gambling. With over 15 years in nonprofit leadership, she joined SHARC in 2022. Clare holds qualifications in social work, psychology, and AOD, and is a Harvard Fellow.



Dom Ennis

Treasurer

Board Member since 2021

Dom is the General Manager for Quality and Service Development at YSAS, with over 20 years in the AOD field. He has managed various community-based, residential and online programs. Passionate about the Youth AOD sector, he advocates for collaborative responses to meet the needs of young people and their families.

We work to prevent and reduce AOD-related harms in the Victorian community by ensuring the people experiencing those harms, and the organisations that support them, are well-represented in policy, program development and public discussion.



Jose Taylor

Board Member since 2021

Jose has 25 years experience in community services and is Director, Youth, Housing and South West at Meli. Starting at Brophy Family and Youth Services, she developed a passion for regional advocacy. Her experience includes youth outreach, justice, and suicide prevention. Jose focuses on partnerships that enhance outcomes for individuals and their support systems.



Dale Hardy

Board Member since 2022

Dale is the Executive Leader of Community Partnerships and Integration at Bendigo Community Health Services. His work focuses on health and wellbeing for marginalised communities. With a background in finance and a Bachelor of Behavioural Science, he brings 30 years of senior experience across housing, homelessness, youth justice, mental health, and multicultural sectors to his collaborative, intersectoral role.



Cath Peake

Board Member since 2023

Cath is the Manager of Mental Health/Alcohol and Other Drugs Integration at Barwon Health. With a Doctorate in Forensic Psychology, she has 17 years of clinical and management experience in AOD, child protection, and youth justice. Cath advocates for harm reduction, evidence-informed practice, and workforce wellbeing in the sector.



VAADA Board Members *continued*



Richie Goonan

Board Member since 2023

Richie is the Executive Manager of Community Health at Youth Projects, leading AOD Youth Outreach and Specialist Primary Health services for the homeless. With 30 years in the community sector, he focuses on policy and service delivery in various areas, advocating for lived experience and driving positive change against inequality.



Dr Stefan Gruenert

Board Member since 2023

Stefan is the CEO of Odyssey Victoria and a psychologist with over 20 years in the AOD sector. A Board Member of VCOSS, he has established residential and community programs in Victoria and co-authored AOD publications. He advocates for a strong and independent AOD sector and family-inclusive practices.



Adrian Webber

Board Member since 2023

Adrian is the General Manager of AOD, Mental Health, and Carer Services at Uniting Vic/Tas. He has extensive experience in youth and adult AOD services, rural and metro, including residential and community programs. Adrian advocates for evidence-based drug policy reform and holds graduate qualifications in psychology, counselling and management.

We thank the following Board Members for their service to VAADA during this period:

Kent Burgess, Your Community Health, Vice President until November 2023 (retired)

Shannon Bell, Uniting Vic/Tas, Treasurer until November 2023 (resigned)

Elisa Buggy, Individual, Board Member until November 2023 (retired)

Professor Victoria Manning, Turning Point, Board Member until November 2023 (retired)

VAADA Staff



Craig Holloway

Board Member since 2024

Craig is a proud Yorta Yorta man with over 25 years in Victoria's AOD sector and is Manager of the Office of the Executive at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. Nationally recognised, he has received multiple awards and contributes to public health, Rainbow Mob, and the community-controlled health sector.

Chris Christoforou

Chief Executive Officer

Chris McDonnell

Corporate Services Manager

Scott Drummond

Head of Policy & Practice

Gillian Clark

*AOD Strategy
& Reform Manager*

Dave Taylor

Advocacy & Media Manager

Caitlyn Wilson

*Communications
& Membership Manager*

Jane Moreton

*Practice Lead,
Sector Development*

Dr James Petty

*Senior Policy
& Research Officer*

Meg Bagnall

Lead, AOD & Family Violence

Trudi Jordan

*Communications
& Events Officer*

Anushka Ananth

*Workforce
Development Coordinator*

Esther Toomey

Project Coordinator

Libby O'Connell

Executive Assistant

Hannah Fordham

*Business Support
Coordinator*

We sincerely thank our former staff Julia Daly, Dejan Jotanovic and Alex Jackson for their dedication and contribution. Your hard work has helped shape VAADA, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

CEO Report

It's been a privilege to assume the Chief Executive Officer role of the Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association (VAADA).

VAADA has a proud history as a member led peak body, and it's an honour to be given the chance to follow in the footsteps of long-time Executive Officer Sam Biondo. Sam has been a fearless voice for the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector and for people impacted by AOD use for decades. I'd like to thank Sam for making me welcome as the new CEO. I'd also like to thank Scott Drummond for taking on Acting Executive Officer duties and continuing the work with the team while the Board finalised its recruitment process.

My first weeks in the role saw me confront what can only be described as a disjointed and at times broken AOD service system in Victoria. The work of the VAADA team in identifying and responding to challenges around access to treatment, data, workforce, funding and intersecting systems of care, has kept me energised over the last 12 months. Our work has included advocating for drug-checking services in Victoria, calling for the creation of the position of Chief AOD Officer, raising awareness on the need for preparedness around potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and nitazenes and engaging in dialogue around the need for an AOD Strategy. I remain hopeful that through the latter in particular, we can develop a comprehensive plan to respond to what remains a significant social and health challenge.

The VAADA team has achieved a large number of outputs and outcomes over the last year which are reflected in this report. They have achieved all this while managing the change that comes with a new leader. This has included the implementation of a new operating structure at VAADA. The changes we continue to build on give us the best chance of supporting our sector as an effective peak body in these challenging times. I thank all the VAADA staff for their outstanding contributions during the year and look forward to continuing our work. I would also like to thank the VAADA Board for their support and trust in empowering me to move forward and carry out this important work. I am proud to work alongside a Board comprised of leaders from across our sector and from around Victoria. Finally, to our members and partners, thank you for your generosity in supporting VAADA's work. Your availability to advise on, contribute to and participate in our broad range of activities, has never ceased to amaze me and has genuinely made the job a joy. We are, and will continue to remain a proud member-led organisation.

Chris Christoforou
Chief Executive Officer



The VAADA team has achieved a large number of outputs and outcomes over the last year which are reflected in this report.

President's Report

Over the last year, the Board of Directors of the Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association (VAADA), have continued to provide strategic leadership for our organisation in what remains a difficult environment.

During a significant period of transition for VAADA, we farewelled long-term CEO Sam Biondo and welcomed our new CEO, Chris Christoforou. We have also witnessed significant changes in staffing and structure at the Victorian Department of Health over the past year. The Board's governance and oversight during this period of transition has been important. I'd like to particularly thank Acting Executive Officer Scott Drummond and Chris for their close engagement and support of the VAADA Board over the last year.

Thank you to all our Board Members for their incredible wisdom and contribution to our peak body, particularly our Vice President Clare Davies (Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre) and Treasurer Dom Ennis (Youth Support & Advocacy Service). A special thanks also to retiring Board Members Kent Burgess (Your Community Health), Shannon Bell (Uniting Vic/Tas), Victoria Manning (Turning Point) and Elisa Buggy for their long-standing commitment and leadership on the Board.

This year we welcomed three new Board Members, Adrian Webber (Uniting Vic/Tas), Stefan Gruenert (Odyssey House) and Richie Goonan (Youth Projects) who have each brought valuable experience and insight to our Board. The Board has also sought to diversify its composition, and following a review of Board skills and experiences, has co-opted Cath Peake from Barwon Health and Craig Holloway from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) to join the Board. This will ensure our sector remains attuned to some of the important reforms that have a direct bearing on our future work, including mental health reform and Treaty with First Peoples. VAADA's submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission is a case in point where we have sought to ensure the issue of alcohol and other drug use is considered part of systemic change and reconciliation.

While the operating context is challenging for our sector and the community more broadly, we have continued to review and invest in the capability of VAADA, not only through our new CEO appointment but by supporting other structural changes in the peak body. This has included signing a lease for a new office in Abbotsford, which will see VAADA move into fit-for-purpose accommodation. Similarly, the Board has spent considerable time reviewing the Rules of Association that will allow VAADA to continue to role model best practice governance, but also continue to reflect its membership and key stakeholders. This is why we have now included AOD Harm Reduction as an explicit part of our Statement of Purposes.

It is also important to reflect on some significant developments in the AOD sector this year which VAADA and our partners have advocated long and hard for. This includes the announcement of a new Victorian AOD Strategy, the appointment of Victoria's first Chief Addiction Advisor, and the ongoing implementation of the Public Intoxication Reforms. VAADA also campaigned hard for the introduction of drug-checking in Victoria, and we look forward to supporting this trial in the coming year to reduce the increasingly high number of overdoses and fatalities in our community.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all VAADA staff for the passion and commitment you bring to the work every day, and to each and every member of the AOD sector in Victoria who continues to show up and provide support and care to our community. We continue to make a difference.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the year ahead.

Dr Tamsin Short

President

Snapshot 2023–2024

Key Achievements

Call for an AOD Strategy for Victoria

Leading the campaign on Drug Checking for Victoria, including submission to the Victorian State Government on a recommended Drug Checking Model

The launch and success of AOD Collaborative ECHO



Completion of V-AOD Assessment Tool Review to adapt AOD assessment tools to better identify individuals who both use family violence and access AOD services

Partnership with La Trobe University Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) and School of Social Work

Development of VAADABase, a data collaboration pilot project, partnering with 15 agencies across Victoria



Capacity Building

- National Suicide Prevention Strategy with the Mental Health Commission
- National Comorbidity Guidelines Framework with the Matilda Centre
- Critical Risk Framework with Family Violence Response
- Family Violence Capability Framework
- The Consumer Participation Project, a collaboration with North and West Metro Alcohol and Other Drug Service (NWMAODS)
- Development of resources: Your Respiratory Health Matters, an initiative to increase vaccination rates in people who use drugs
- Review of Vulnerable Children's Framework with the Department of Health
- Public Intoxication Reform Justice Evaluation Advisory Committee

Sector Support

- Leadership Communities of Practice, attended by over 200 attendees from over 50 organisations, and 5 sectors
- Clinician Communities of Practice, and reflective practice sessions, attended by over 250 clinicians, from over 50 different organisations
- Elevate initiative, provided 22 free trainings to 623 AOD workers
- Non-residential withdrawal Nurses and Emergency Department Nursing Networks to provide peer-to-peer support and exchange of wisdom. With over 90 attendees across the year.
- Sex, Sexuality and Gender Diverse AOD Communities of Practice
- AOD Collaborative ECHO, with 400 people registered and an average attendance of 60 people per session
- Youth AOD Communities of Practice

Media Hits

29

Radio
interviews

9

Television
appearances

60

Online
citations

30

Print
mentions

Mental Health Reform

VAADA participated in a range of consultations to partner with the Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) sector in the process of reform following the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System including:

- Gippsland Local Implementation team consultation for the MHWB Workforce capability strategy
- Lived Experience Leadership Strategy
- Peer Callback Service
- Seclusion and Restraint
- Statewide Trauma Service co-design
- Regional and rural workforce incentives program
- Information sharing framework
- Mental Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

Submissions/Publications

- Victoria's Inquiry into Women's Pain
- Inquiry into Capturing Data on Perpetrators of Family Violence in Victoria
- Submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission on the AOD System and First Peoples in Victoria
- Submission to Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into Vaping (Vic)
- Submission to Department of Social Services consultation into a Stronger, More Diverse and Independent Community Sector (Fed)
- Drug Checking: Principles of Practice: A Model for Victoria
- State Budget Analysis 2024-25
- Workforce Survey and Snapshot series
- Potent Synthetic Opioids Preparedness Plan
- 2023 Waitlist Survey
- State Budget Submission 2024-25



Impact Metrics

30

events hosted
over 2023-2024

1,700

attendees
at events

74%

average **satisfaction**
rating at events

2,000

people trained over
46 sessions

73%

average **satisfaction**
rating for training

2,500

Facebook
visitors reached

7,500

AOD Prompt cards
sent to treatment
services within Victoria
and interstate.

437

hours of content
watched by **3,400**
viewers on AOD TV
and YouTube.

1,231

new LinkedIn
followers and
105,856 organic
impressions.

424

Collaborations via
survey to support to
the AOD sector.

565

ENEWS
campaigns sent to
2627 subscribers

300+

jobs promoted
over on the VAADA
Jobs Board.

Drug Checking Advocacy

VAADA launched a statewide campaign in 2023 calling for the introduction of drug-checking services in Victoria.

The campaign featured a range of activities, including engagement with Members of Parliament, discussions across the health and social service sector, and advocacy through various media platforms. By October 2023, 89 organisations – including those in health, AOD, housing, unions, and other peak bodies - had endorsed a position paper developed by VAADA, calling for the implementation of drug-checking services in Victoria.

Throughout the summer, coordinated media efforts were conducted, drawing on voices from both within and outside the AOD sector. In response to several mass overdose events, the urgency of the campaign was exacerbated by growing concerns over potent synthetic opioids, such as nitazenes. In the lead-up to the Victorian 2024/25 budget, VAADA and Harm Reduction Victoria jointly produced a paper titled Drug Checking: Principles of Practice, detailing a proposed model for drug-checking services in Victoria.

In late June 2024, VAADA welcomed the Victorian Government's announcement that it would begin a trial implementation of both mobile and fixed-site drug-checking services, marking a significant step forward in harm reduction efforts across the state.



Service Providers Conference 2024

Every year, the Victorian AOD Service Providers Conference stands as a highlight on VAADA’s event calendar, and 2024 was no exception.

The AOD Service Providers Conference is a mainstay for networking, knowledge-sharing and professional development in the AOD sector. This year’s theme, “Inspiring Change: Excellence in AOD Treatment and Harm Reduction”, set the stage for a day full of insights and connection.

The event began with a vibrant networking breakfast, followed by an opening address from The Hon. Ingrid Stitt, Minister for Mental Health. A total of 578 people attended the Service Providers Conference (in person and online), reflecting the conference’s broad reach and appeal. A standout session featured a presentation by Dr. Paul MacCartney and Dr. Dean Membrey on “Not Just Antabuse – CAPA: Community Access to Pharmacotherapy for Alcohol,” which captivated the audience. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues while engaging with a diverse range of speakers and topics.



Regional Engagement

VAADA hosted four AOD Service Provider forums, on behalf of Murray PHN, across northern Victoria.

The forums create the opportunity for local staff and services to engage in networking, professional development and share practice wisdom. The forums are co-designed with local service providers and aim to be responsive to rural and regional needs. The ever-popular forums were held in Wangaratta, Mildura, Bendigo and Shepparton and included diverse topics such as learning from lived experience, navigating complexity, prevention and management of occupational violence and aggression and using social media to increase program awareness. VAADA thanks the Murray PHN for their continuing support in bringing professional development opportunities to rural and regional services in Lodden, Mallee, Goulburn Valley and Hume.



Snapshot 2023–2024 continued



VAADA **collaborated** with a range of organisations and networks in various capacities to help meet its mission and vision.

Alcohol and Drug Foundation

Alcohol Change Victoria

Allied State & Territory

AOD Peak Bodies

Arcadian Digital

Association of Participating
Service Users

Australian Alcohol and other
Drugs Council

Australian Nursing and
Midwifery Federation

Beyond the Fruit Bowl
HR Consulting

Centre for Excellence in Child
& Family Welfare

Centre for Mental Health Learning

Cleugh Consulting

Community Services & Health
Industry Training Board (Vic)

Domestic, Family and Sexual
Violence Commission

Ethnic Communities Council
of Victoria

Federation of Community
Legal Centres

Gippsland Alcohol and Drug
Services Alliance

Goulburn Valley Health

Grampians Regional
Integrated Network

Graeme Webb Design

Harm Reduction Victoria

Health & Community
Services Union

Latitude Network

Melbourne University

Mental Health Victoria

Monash University

No to Violence

Professor Kate Seear

RMIT University

Safe and Equal

Tandem

The Australian Clinical Forensic
Medical Alliance

The Matilda Centre

Trezona Consulting

Turning Point

University of NSW

Victorian Healthcare Association

Victoria Police

Victorian Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

Victorian Council of Social Service
Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative
Leadership Group

VicHealth

Victorian Skills Authority

Victorian Mental Illness
Awareness Council

Yarra Drug & Health Forum

Supporters and Members

VAADA thanks the following **supporters**:



VAADA's **Organisational membership** comprises AOD-specific organisations, hospitals, community and primary health, youth services, forensic, legal and more.

Access Health and Community
 Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)
 Alfred Health - Adult Mental Health Services
 Banyule Community Health Service
 Barwon Health Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Services
 Bendigo Community Health Services
 Better Health Network (BHN)
 Caraniche
 Cohealth
 Colac Area Health
 DPV Health
 Drummond Street Services
 Eastern Access Health & Community (EACH)
 Family Drug Support Australia (FDS)
 Fitzroy Legal Service
 Gippsland Lakes Complete Health

Gippsland Southern Health Service
 Goulburn Valley Health – Goulburn Valley Alcohol and Drug Service
 Harm Reduction Victoria
 Health and Community Services Union
 Inspiro
 Know Drugs
 Latrobe Community Health Service
 Meli
 Nexus Dual Diagnosis Consultation Service
 Odyssey Victoria
 Primary Care Connect
 Peninsula Health
 Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
 Salvation Army Territorial AOD Unit
 Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)

St Mary's House of Welcome
 Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health
 The First Step Program
 The Loop Australia
 The Women's Alcohol & Drug Service (WADS)
 Thorne Harbour Health
 Turning Point and Spectrum Statewide Services
 Uniting Victoria Tasmania, AOD and Mental Health Division
 VincentCare Victoria
 Western Health Drug Services
 Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre (WRAD)
 Windana
 Your Community Health
 Youth Projects
 Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)

Treasurer's Report

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the 2023/2024 financial year. This report outlines both VAADA's financial achievements over the past year and the challenges we anticipate for the year ahead.

Financial Performance Overview

In 2023/2024, VAADA recorded a modest total comprehensive surplus of \$72,830, a large decrease from the \$276,512 surplus achieved in 2022/2023. This reduction is represented by an operating deficit of \$82,740 for the year, offset by \$155,570 from favourable investment returns. The organisation's equity has increased slightly to \$2,086,203, indicating a strong financial position. A full copy of VAADA's Audited Financial Accounts can be found on the website: <https://www.vaada.org.au/>.

Revenue Analysis

VAADA recorded total revenue of \$2,741,790 for the year, an increase of \$174,285 from the previous year. This growth was mainly due to a rise in State Grant Revenue, which increased to \$2,092,981, reflecting additional project funding. The Biennial Conference, a key revenue source in previous years, did not contribute to income this year but remains an important element of future budgets.

Expenditure Analysis

Total expenses for the year were \$2,824,530, up from \$2,402,303 in the previous year. This included an increase in the cost of employee benefits, following organisational restructuring, including new full time equivalent roles and subsequent CPI and superannuation increases.

2024-2025 Budget Outlook

The 2024/2025 financial year poses challenges for VAADA as is does for many of our members. The constrained fiscal environment is making planning difficult. In response, the Board is committed to supporting the pursuit of new relationships to diversify revenue streams, while investing in VAADA's ongoing capability to advocate for better resourcing for the AOD sector as a whole.

Acknowledgement of Funders

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Victorian Department of Health, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Family Safety Victoria, Murray PHN, and others for their ongoing support.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Finance, Risk, and Audit Subcommittee, in particular outgoing Treasurer Shannon Bell for his support of me transitioning into the Treasurer role.

Thank you also to VAADA CEO Chris Christoforou and his staff for their unwavering support and dedication. Special thanks to Ruth Watson and Associates for their accounting assistance and LDAssurance Chartered Accountants for their diligent audit work.

Dom Ennis

Treasurer

Financial Statement

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association Inc. ABN 19 039 293 679

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income (For the Year Ended 30 June 2024)

	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
Revenue		
Grant Revenue - Commonwealth	452,996	543,163
Grant revenue - State	2,092,981	1,486,328
Biennial conference income	-	395,687
Interest income	138,637	88,385
Membership fees	32,636	31,669
Other events	23,862	19,104
Other income	678	3,169
Total revenue	2,741,790	2,567,505
Expenses		
Employee benefits expense	(1,424,667)	(1,321,317)
Amortisation	(46,611)	(46,274)
Depreciation - motor vehicles	(13,562)	-
Computer expenses	(77,808)	(97,722)
Accounting & audit fees	(15,480)	(13,380)
Finance expenses	(6,321)	(4,163)
Meeting expenses	(161,175)	(405,469)
ADRIA research grant	(693,622)	(231,234)
Administration expenses	(109,822)	(140,525)
Consulting fees	(121,882)	(97,407)
Occupancy expenses	(68,540)	(3,297)
Other expenses	954	(4,910)
Board governance expenses	(28,929)	(13,706)
Professional development	(57,065)	(22,899)
Total expenses	(2,824,530)	(2,402,303)
Profit/(loss) for the year	(82,740)	165,202
Other comprehensive income	155,570	111,310
Total comprehensive income for the year	72,830	276,512
Total Equity	2,086,203	2,013,375

Contact VAADA

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