

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**THURSDAY 31 AUGUST 2017**

## **International Overdose Awareness Day**

Today the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) with many in the community, commemorate the community members who have lost their lives through fatal overdose and recognise the ongoing trauma which survivors and families experience.

We recognise that this is an issue central in the lives of so many and that this day symbolises both the overwhelming loss of loved ones, as well as the strength of families and survivors going forward. At the same time, International Overdose Awareness Day is an opportunity to remember that overdoses are preventable and that we can do more to reduce the number of fatal overdoses.

Mr Sam Biondo, EO, VAADA, says, 'we recognise that this day means so much for so many people. Those who have lost their lives through fatal overdose should be remembered with their families and loved ones supported and going forward we should learn what we can to seek to reduce fatal overdose.'

There is an increasing amount of good work being undertaken to reduce overdose, including the provision of naloxone, increased peer led activity and the pending real time prescription monitoring system.

Mr Biondo continues, 'these measures, which are promising, will have some impact but more should be done. There should be greater emphasis on pragmatic evidence informed approaches to drug policy aiming to save lives, rather than approaches, which may be more popular, but are often ineffective'.

'There are a range of initiatives which we need to consider, including a Medically Supervised Injecting Facility, pill testing and heroin prescribing; these measures have been trialled extensively in other jurisdictions and are supported by a wealth of research. They are not particularly expensive measures, carry minimal risk and all contribute to saving lives.'

'This day should remind government, health, welfare agencies and the community that the aim of drug policy should be reducing harm and saving lives, which includes exploring new ways to achieve this,' Mr Biondo said.

*VAADA is the peak body that represents over 80 Alcohol and other Drug services across Victoria. On a daily basis these services are dealing with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption.*

**For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Sam Biondo on 0414 974 121 for comment or if unavailable, David Taylor on 0413 914 206.**