

MEDIA RELEASE

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Vulnerable at the mercy of an unregulated market

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) urgently calls for an increase in publically funded residential rehabilitation capacity throughout Victoria and the introduction of an accreditation and registration system to control the rapid growth of private unregulated facilities.

This evening's *4 Corners* program highlighted the dire consequences of the entrenched shortage of public AOD residential rehabilitation beds and how this shortage has led to a boom in for profit AOD residential facilities.

Mr Sam Biondo, Executive Officer of VAADA, say, 'NSW currently has well over 600 AOD residential rehabilitation beds while there are approximately 230 in Victoria. This shortage, in combination with ever increasing demand, has created an opportunity for a rapid expansion of unregulated private facilities. The problem with this is that in most cases we don't know anything about the organisations or the operators. Although many of these organisations may well undertake good work, in the absence of regulation and reporting, the community cannot be assured that, when sending a loved one into a private facility, they are going to receive the appropriate care and best practice treatment'.

Victorian AOD agencies, recently surveyed by VAADA, indicated that demand for treatment continues to increase year on year.

Mr Biondo continues, 'it is absolutely crucial that the AOD treatment sector is adequately resourced to reduce the extensive wait times, which is up to six months in some cases for publicly funded residential rehabilitation. Regrettably, many people, feeling they have no other choice, are digging deep into savings, superannuation or perhaps re-mortgaging their property to access private AOD treatment which can cost over \$30,000 a stay.'

A recent study indicated that there are over 200,000 people across Australia in need of, but not accessing treatment.

Mr Biondo continues, 'Victorians need to be able to access treatment when they need it, not months later. The extensive wait times are effectively barriers to treatment, with many of these people either paying for private treatment, ending up in prison or the emergency room.'

Research indicates that 3.3% of our health burden is attributed to alcohol, with 2% attributed to illicit substances.

Mr Biondo concludes, 'readily available AOD treatment services will reduce the overall burden on acute health and justice services, and increase the rapidly expanding overdose toll, which in 2015, totalled 453 in Victoria.'

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.