

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Family Drug Court; coming to terms with complex issues**



The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) commends the Victorian Government in piloting Australia's first Family Drug Treatment Court.

VAADA's position paper on Drug Courts, which calls for the piloting of a family drug treatment court, notes that alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems are evident with at least one or more parents in 50 – 70 per cent of children placed in care by the Children's Court. Although this does not necessarily equate to AOD problems causing the child protection issues in every case, it is likely to contribute to these problems.

Mr Sam Biondo, EO of VAADA, says, 'child protection issues are complex and present a range of challenges. These challenges are accentuated when AOD dependency presents as a co-occurring problem and necessitate appropriate and timely interventions to ensure the best interests of the child and ensure that all appropriate avenues for reunification are explored'.

'Family Drug Treatment Courts are part of the solution.'

Mr Biondo continues, 'Family Drug Treatment Courts enjoy high levels of success in international jurisdictions and so it is anticipated that Victorian model will deliver positive outcomes'.

The piloting of the Family Drug Treatment Court provides a timely reminder of the efficacy of the Victorian Drug Court and the dire need to expand this court to all jurisdictions in Victoria to reduce the pressure on the overburdened prison system.

'Approximately 70 per cent of prisoners have used illicit drugs in the past 12 months; we need to ensure that the justice system can provide a therapeutic approach to dealing with the vulnerabilities of these individuals.'

Mr Biondo continues, 'the Victorian Drug Court has a proven track record in reducing re-offending in a highly complex and vulnerable cohort of offenders and increases positive community participation. Further expanding the Victorian Drug Court would be a welcome addition to the laudable announcement of the Family Drug Treatment Court'.

*VAADA is the peak body that represents over 100 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.**