

## **State Election & New Investment announcements**

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) welcomes the separate announcements from the Liberal Party and the Greens with regard to pledging additional resourcing to the AOD treatment sector in the coming years.

Two recent announcements from the Liberal Party provide for additional resourcing for the AOD treatment sector to undertake a range of activities and funding to commence the development of a real time prescription monitoring system.

Furthermore, the Liberal Party have promised that ‘a re-elected Napthine Government will invest \$56.8 million’ to deliver a range of initiatives.

Mr Sam Biondo, Executive Officer of VAADA, says, ‘this is a welcome announcement which will assist in addressing some enduring service deficits in the system. The sector has highlighted limitations in resourcing for residential rehab beds and care and recovery coordination, as well as a number of challenges emerging with intake and assessment – that the Liberal Party has indicated that part of this allocation has been earmarked to address these deficits is a welcome announcement’.

A separate part of this allocation has been earmarked for the development of a real time prescription monitoring system.

Mr Biondo continues, ‘there is a general consensus among the various health sectors that a real time prescription monitoring system is a key part of the solution to reduce the unacceptably high pharmaceutical toll, which has been, in 2012 and 2013, higher than the road toll. The announcement from the Liberal Party regarding this initiative is also very welcome.’

The Greens recently released health policy provided for the additional recurrent allocation of \$35 million annually to the AOD treatment sector as well as the uptake of needle and syringe programs throughout Victoria’s prisons.

Mr Biondo says, ‘the recurrent nature of the \$35 million annual allocation is very welcome and would provide for the long term stability for the AOD sector and, in the mid to long term, result in significant cost savings in acute health and law and order expenditure.’

Earlier research from the Victorian Ombudsman indicates that the Hepatitis C infection rate in Victoria’s prisons is approximately 41% and with no access to sterile injecting equipment, prisons have become a hotbed of infection creating both health implications within the prison system and perpetuating long term chronic illness in the community.

Mr Biondo says, ‘the body of evidence supporting prison based needle and syringe programs is overwhelming and the policy black-hole in this space is causing significant preventable harm to the community. We know that the risk to prison staff is minimal, with no recorded assaults on staff with dispensed equipment in any of the many jurisdictions which have undertaken this initiative.

‘VAADA commends both parties on their commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians through enhanced resourcing to the AOD sector.

*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.**

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