

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Mental Health Royal Commission

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) welcomes the Victorian Government's announcement to hold a Royal Commission into Mental Health.

This Royal Commission will provide a platform to highlight the endemic and deteriorating circumstances pertaining to how we respond to those experiencing serious mental health and other associated issues.

Mr Sam Biondo, EO VAADA, says, 'the complexity evident with many people presenting to various health, mental health, alcohol and other drug, housing, family violence, youth services as well as the correctional system is in part exacerbated by existing system limitations in the mental health system.

Mr Biondo continues, 'on a daily basis, opportunities are lost for optimal service responses due to issues relating to access, capacity, stigma and broader system capacity problems. More can be done to help those entering the hospital, correctional, alcohol and other drug as well as the many other community services to engage with the broader mental health issues more appropriately and meaningfully. Punitive settings such as the corrosive correctional system do little to address either those with a mental illness currently filling our prisons.

'As a result, we see many preventable deaths, distraught families, an overwhelmed hospital system and a continuing prison build. This Royal Commission will hopefully provide the machinery to cut through the harms and engender a meaningful and effective response to mental health and broader associated harms'.

Mr Biondo concludes, 'I also note that the impact of the NDIS on the mental health system continues as the system countenances a range of system gaps and emerging cohorts left out of the system. We welcome this Royal Commission.'

*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 0414 917 121 for comment or if unavailable, David Taylor on 0413 914 206.**