

MEDIA RELEASE

Overdose Awareness Day 2019 – VAADA Statement

31 August 2019

Overdose Awareness Day reminds us that overdose does not discriminate, the impacts are felt far and wide the toll just continues increasing year on year.

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) stands with our member alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment providers in support and solidarity with the families and communities who have endured loss through substance use.

Drug dependency, at risk use, and fatal overdose does not discriminate.

Mr Sam Biondo, Executive Officer, VAADA, states, ‘we see people from all walks of life seeking support for substance dependence. Money, class, education and postcode provide no surety or security. I have heard devastating stories of people of means losing a child to fatal overdose; I have heard equally devastating stories of people experiencing chronic disadvantage and entrenched trauma, who also succumb to overdose’.

Close to 4000 Victorians have fatally overdosed since 2010, with the accompanying pain and suffering cutting deep into the community.

Mr Biondo continues, ‘this death data remains a blight on the policy landscape, with the families, treatment providers and other specialists calling for sensible policies to counter the growing toll. These include supervised injecting capacity in high risk regions, pill testing, a continuum of care for people experiencing substance dependence, so services can continue to support people well into their recovery and greater alcohol and other drug treatment support for those identified through Victoria’s real time prescription monitoring’.

‘With Victoria’s Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) working too well, it is clear that additional capacity across the state would take the weight of the North Richmond facility and provide much needed harm reduction and referral services to at risk cohorts’.

With police, coronial, ambulance and waste water analysis data all pointing to increasing opioid use in Victoria, it is unrealistic to assume that one MSIR can solely stem the tide of opioids.

‘Over one Victorian per day fatally overdoses. The cost to families is incalculable. The cost to the community is immense. This is preventable.

For further comment contact Sam Biondo 03 9412 5600