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2019 off to a flying start

Welcome to the first VAADA newsletter for 2019. As you will note from this edition, there has been a tremendous amount of activity across the Victorian alcohol and drug (AOD) sector already this year.

As an opener to the year the February VAADA Biennial conference brought together over 650 sector staff and a range of stakeholders to hear from over 120 presenters in what was VAADA's largest and most successful sector conference yet. National and international guest speakers included Professor David Nutt and Professor Fiona Measham from the UK, Jill Gallagher speaking on the Victorian Aboriginal Treaty process and Professor Amanda Baker from Newcastle University speaking on interventions related to dual diagnosis. In his opening address State Minister Martin Foley congratulated the sector and VAADA for their work over recent years and acknowledged this effort with the announcement of a \$4 million Innovation fund to begin over the coming year. The announcement was warmly received with due acknowledgement of the Minister's efforts and significant investment the State Government has made in AOD over recent years.

Also in February, the Federal Government announced continued funding for the 'National Ice Action Strategy' supportive of PHNs and currently funded agencies, inclusive of AOD withdrawal management, residential rehabilitation treatment service providers, AOD Peaks and organisations delivering national activities.

This newsletter also introduces the DHHS Forensic Foundations online learning course jointly developed by VAADA. The course is designed to provide the AOD sector with foundational knowledge of forensic treatment and the Victorian forensic service system. As outlined in the article, all Victorian AOD staff are encouraged to undertake the four module course which covers: 'background and AOD interface with the criminal justice system', 'Key stakeholders and AOD forensic system

settings', 'Processes and procedures', 'Clinical safety, self-care and further training'. A link to the course is on the VAADA homepage.

You will also note in this newsletter that VAADA has begun in earnest project activity around the Family Violence capability framework, the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), as well as the Child information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). VAADA has begun consultation processes with sector representatives, and based on this will be developing a range of activities and information events for the sector. More news on this as we move forward.

Most noteworthy over recent months has been the Victorian Government's announcement of the Royal Commission in Mental Health. VAADA certainly welcomes this announcement in the recognition that it provides a historic opportunity to address service needs of those most affected by mental illness as well as those with co-occurring problematic substance use. Over coming months VAADA will be engaging with the sector to identify key areas of concern, and possible strategies to improve treatment and quality of life outcomes.

Sam Biondo
Executive Officer



VAADA's conference: A new

Based on feedback from conference attendees, the recently held VAADA 2019 conference was considered to be an overwhelming success. Having exhausted the capacity of the Jasper Hotel to cater for sector demand a decision was made to move to a significantly larger venue. On all accounts it now appears the sector strongly supported the move.

From last conference we have grown from 300 participants per day to 475 on day one and 450 on day two. Program wise we moved from having 90 presentations over two days to having over 120 for the same period. We also moved from having half a dozen stallholders to having scores of them adding to the space's dynamic atmosphere.



There was no doubt that there was some incredibly robust discussion and debate in and out of sessions. Nevertheless, one controversial aspect of the conference according to feedback has been how to balance and reflect the enormous diversity of the sector whilst still allowing time for deeper conversation and analysis. Some people loved the introduction of 10-minute sessions and the sheer variety of presentations, while others lamented not being able to attend many of the parallel sessions on offer or would have liked more time to focus on fewer issues.



It is hoped that some of this 'balance' will be addressed in future service provider's conferences, which are much more curated events with fewer presentations which would allow the sector to participate with issues in greater depth. The conference was very much a reflection of its theme and the sector being a "jack of all trades". The incredibly diverse work on display at the conference is certainly something to celebrate and the quality of the diverse presentations on offer were indicative of a maturing and developing sector.



Professors Nutt, Measham and Baker all presented incredibly informative and evidence based presentations that will affect many of the foundations of our practice for some time. Jill Gallagher's update on the Treaty process was an important reminder that empowering our clients involves much more than a narrow focus on drug treatment.

There were some very dynamic presentations during the breakout sessions. Behind the scenes logistics meant I was only able to make a few of the sessions (the talks in the overdose stream and North Richmond's discussion of their experience in setting up the MSIR were personal highlights).



The conference was also far more diverse than in previous years, with a high number of consumers and students

venue and better than ever

participating. It was great to see students, peers and workers in allied sectors presenting alongside AOD professionals and contributing to the robustness of the sector.

Victorian MP Fiona Patten described the conference as “excellent” in Parliament. She also made note of many of the important presentations at the conference and made a commitment to provide AOD workers with the tools they need to effectively deal with AOD issues. Minister Martin Foley made a very positive speech about VAADA’s work and that of the sector and made a historic announcement about establishment of a \$4m “AOD Sector Innovation Fund” which will shortly be established. In broad terms such a fund will seek to enhance the planning and establishment of innovative activity across the AOD sector.

All in all the conference was able to show-case a huge range of agency and program activity right across Victoria, therefore continuing its tradition of being ‘of the sector and for the sector’. The breadth of the material presented meant that there was something in it for everyone, from clinicians to clients, managers to peers, cross-sectoral parties and other stakeholders.



The strong support and constructive feedback that VAADA has received for this conference builds upon the wealth of experience we have gained from staging our prior conferences and events. This will allow us to continue in the tradition of providing conferences ‘for everyone’ in the future.

VAADA would like to thank all those who participated with their presentations, and to all those individuals who attended, as well as the many organisations who supported the conference. Supporting organisations included the Australian Department of Health, silver and bronze sponsors, and display tables. Silver sponsors included the following agencies:



An Australian Government Initiative



The VAADA website now hosts an online calendar where events can be uploaded and sighted. To access this free online service, go to www.vaada.org.au/events

Family Violence Capability in the AOD Sector

To address family violence in Victoria, the Royal Commission into Family Violence was launched in February 2015 and a report including 277 recommendations was released in March 2016.

In 2016 the Victorian Government released the guiding document: Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change. This initiated a number of reforms including the:

- Family Violence Capability Framework;
- Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM);
- Child information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

In this context, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Family Safety Victoria commissioned VAADA in late 2018 to undertake two projects:

Firstly, DHHS has commissioned VAADA to support the AOD sector with the implementation of the CISS, FVISS and MARAM. Building on existing training opportunities provided by DHHS, VAADA will, in the course of our work provide practice guidance on the implications of the reforms in the AOD context.

In a second stream of activity, Family Safety Victoria has commissioned VAADA to support the AOD sector with the implementation of the Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework.

The Capability Framework identifies workforce capabilities associated with responding to victim survivors and

perpetrators of intimate partner violence. It is anticipated that the capabilities outlined in the framework will over time be embedded in industry-specific codes or standards.

VAADA is aware that AOD and Family Violence service provision is underpinned by a range of frameworks, sometimes with conflicting practice principles. To help inform the AOD's response to family violence, VAADA will develop guiding practice principles at the intersection of AOD and Family Violence.

To gain insight into the current response to family violence in AOD services, VAADA is engaging in ongoing consultation processes with sector representatives. Based on these consultations, a work plan will be developed and a range of activities and information events will be planned for the sector. We will publish a number of resources that will support our sector with the practical application of the Information Sharing schemes. We are planning to work with the Association of Participating Service Users (APSU) to inform AOD service consumers of the legislative changes. VAADA will also create a number of opportunities to discuss the implications of the family violence reforms for the AOD sector.

VAADA is working with other sector representatives, such as Domestic Violence Victoria (DWWic), Council to Homeless People (ChP) and No to Violence (NtV) to continue to develop an intersectoral response.

If you have any queries or like to be involved, please contact Marije, VAADA's Family Violence Capability Project Lead on: mroos@vaada.org.au

SafeScript has now rolled out across Victoria

SafeScript, a new system providing doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists with access to patient prescription records for high-risk medicines, is now live across Victoria.

Several initiatives are available to support the introduction of SafeScript:

- SafeScript face-to-face and online training for doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists is available through www.vtphna.org.au/safescript-training-hub.
- The SafeScript Pharmaceutical Helpline (1800 737 233) offers free and confidential advice 24/7 to people who are concerned about their use of prescription medicines or

that of a family member.

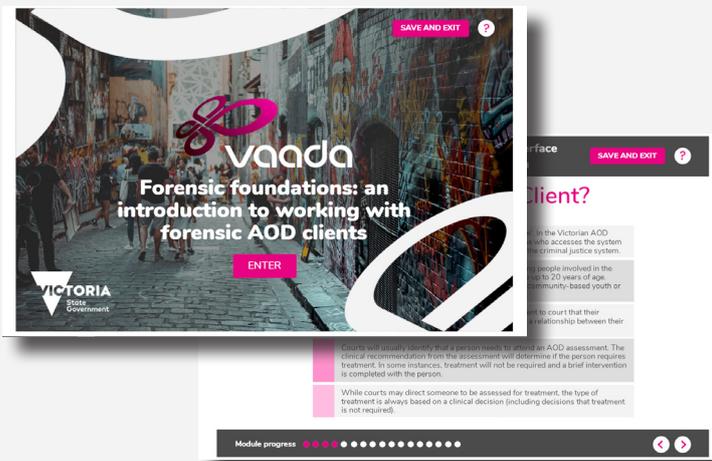
- Reconnexion (1300 273 266), www.reconnexion.org.au, provides support around benzodiazepine dependency and related conditions such as anxiety disorders and depression. In addition to counselling and group programs, Reconnexion can assist health practitioners in developing treatment plans for their patients.
- For GPs that require additional support in treating patients with high-risk prescription medication concerns and complex needs, new GP Clinical Advisors, are now available via 1800 812 804 (DACAS line).

More information at www.safescript.vic.gov.au

Forensic Foundations online learning course is now live

In response to increasing demand for forensic specific treatment services, and a need to increase the forensic capacity of the AOD workforce, a number of new forensic training opportunities for sector staff are now available.

Forensic Foundations is a new online learning course, designed to provide the AOD sector with foundational knowledge of forensic treatment and the Victorian forensic service system. All Victorian AOD staff are encouraged to undertake the course.



The course comprises four modules taking approximately one hour to complete. These include:

- Background and AOD interface with the criminal justice system
- Key stakeholders and AOD forensic system settings
- Processes and procedures
- Clinical safety, self-care and further training

The course also includes a printable map of the AOD service system to help AOD staff understand key parts of the system and the interface between AOD treatment and the criminal justice system.

At the end of each module, there is a short quiz designed to consolidate learning.

Participants receive a certificate of completion once they have completed all the modules. There is also a resources section containing links to useful websites.

Following completion of this course, participants were able to participate in the 'Forensic Fundamentals' face-to-face clinical training.

Forensic Fundamentals

Forensic Fundamentals is a half-day face-to-face forensic clinical training session for Victorian AOD Workers.

The Forensic Fundamentals training session provides attendees with information and clinical skills for working with forensic clients. The aim of the training is to enhance key clinical skills to enable clinicians to better work with forensic clients and the capability of clinicians to work collaboratively with Justice colleagues managing forensic clients in the community.

Forensic Fundamentals has been developed and delivered by Caraniche in partnership with TaskForce; and evaluated by 360Edge.

To access these courses, please visit the VAADA website.

<https://www.vaada.org.au/>

Review of Forensic AOD Targets and System Settings

DHHS is undertaking a project to review forensic AOD treatment targets and system settings. The aim is to explore a range of causal factors (including systemic) that have been impacting on AOD treatment providers' ability to meet minimum forensic targets in recent years. The project will provide recommendations on new system settings and targets to be in place from 1 July 2019 for all state-funded AOD providers delivering services to forensic clients.

To date, two sector workshops have been facilitated by DHHS with AOD staff having the opportunity to provide input into the discussion on the development of future state targets for consortia and stand-alone providers. Formal advice and guidance will be issued to providers in coming months.

If you have questions about the project please email: AOD.enquiries@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Mental Health Royal Commission

In February 2019 the Victorian Government announced that Penny Armytage will chair the Royal Commission in Mental Health, joined by commissioners Associate Professor Alex Cockram, Professor Allan Fels AO and Professor Bernadette McSherry. It is anticipated that the Commission will deliver a preliminary report by November 2019, with its final report due in October 2020.

The Terms of Reference include:

1. How to most effectively prevent mental illness and suicide, and support people to recover from mental illness, early in life, early in illness and early in episode, through Victoria's mental health system, and in close partnership with other services.
2. How to deliver the best mental health outcomes and improve access to and the navigation of Victoria's mental health system for people of all ages: (See Terms of Reference link for full list)
3. How to best support the needs of family members and carers of people living with mental illness.
4. How to improve mental health outcomes, taking into account best practice and person-centred treatment

and care models, for those in the Victorian community, especially those at greater risk of experiencing poor mental health, including but not limited to people: (See Terms of Reference for full list)

5. How to best support those in the Victorian community who are living with both mental illness and problematic alcohol and drug use, including through evidence-based harm minimisation approaches.
6. Any other matters necessary to satisfactorily resolve the matters set out in paragraphs 1-5.

VAADA welcomes the opportunity to support the Commission to better identify the service needs of individuals and their families with co-occurring problematic substance use and mental health issues, and to devise strategies to improve treatment and quality of life outcomes. These individuals often present as being some of the most disenfranchised and stigmatised people living within our community.

Please follow the link for the full Terms of Reference:

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/royal-commission-mental-health-terms-of-reference>

Sector development

Service Provider's Conference, save the date

The AOD Service Provider's Conference aims to support AOD sector staff through a series of informative presentations, sessions and plenaries highlighting new and innovative practice and evidence informed treatments. The next service provider's conference is on Friday 31 May 2019 at the Catholic Leadership Centre.

Murray PHN AOD Leadership Hub

The Murray PHN is one of Victoria's largest PHN regions stretching from Mildura in the State's North West, to Albury-Wodonga in the North East, and contains major regional centres including Bendigo and Shepparton. Recently, Murray PHN approached VAADA seeking to build a hub of AOD expertise to help overcome rural isolation for managers and team leaders, support best practice approaches through mutual support and professional development and provide rural and local based opportunities for rural AOD leaders.

VAADA will soon be scoping the needs of the region through consultation with regional staff on the development of the Leadership Hub model.

Win an iPad. Complete the Victorian AOD sector workforce survey

VAADA, DHHS and the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction have been collaborating to undertake the 2019 AOD workforce survey. This will be the fourth AOD workforce study and will continue the time-series data collection of an agency-level survey and a worker survey.

The online survey will be administered by VAADA in April and May 2019 and will help define and quantify the AOD workforce including:

- the size, characteristics, qualifications, employment patterns and distribution of the AOD workforce
- changes in the AOD workforce, with particular reference to career pathways and flows
- workforce challenges affecting AOD services in Victoria

VAADA encourages all staff and agencies to undertake the survey. To support your engagement, those who complete the survey will go in the running to win one of a number of Apple iPads. The survey will be promoted through e-News and other channels in coming weeks.