

PRESS RELEASE

31/8/2023

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Providing Support for Victoria's most stigmatized population

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) stands with families, people who use drugs and the agencies providing AOD treatment and harm reduction services in remembering those who have died through overdose as well as celebrating the efforts of the many tireless advocates who have been calling for drug law reform.

While so many focus on the drugs when considering the causes of fatal overdose, it is important to remember the other contributing factors which are so often overlooked.

Stigma is a significant cause of overdose; stigma and discrimination stymie pragmatic harm reduction policy development, creating unnecessarily morally iniquitous narratives pertaining to illicit drugs and the people who use them. These narratives are incredibly harmful and limit the voice of those with lived and living experience.

Such narratives create significant impediments on what we know reduces fatal overdose, such as medically supervised injecting rooms, drug checking and public alert systems and comprehensive availability of naloxone.

On International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) we are acutely aware of the impact of stigma on pragmatic AOD policy as we remember the hundreds of preventable fatal overdoses which occur in this state annually.

Mr Scott Drummond, A/EO of VAADA says, 'we need to take stock of the human cost of policy inaction and delay. Governments must take a proactive stance toward reducing fatal overdose through implementing policies that work. As it stands, sensible drug policy is almost only ever progressed by catastrophe. Policies such as supervised injecting, which reduce fatal overdose and provides health and social supports and drug checking, which informs us of hazardous substances prior to them being taken, are simple steps which will save lives and free up our over burdened healthcare system.'

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Scott Drummond, A/ Executive Officer of VAADA, on 0400 722 859 for comment or if unavailable, David Taylor on 0413 914 206.

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Media stories on alcohol and other drugs may be traumatic for some people. Support is available and we ask that media agencies consider publishing the details below:

If this story has raised issues about your own or others drug and alcohol use, please contact the national hotline for confidential counselling and referral on 1800 250 015

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.