

PRESS RELEASE

3/11/2023

[starts]

Public Intoxication reforms are overdue and need to be supported

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) supports the public intoxication reforms noting that they are a necessary public health measure and that intoxication is unambiguously a health matter.

The Victorian alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector, which supports thousands of Victorians each year experiencing substance dependence, views this reform as a priority in strengthening the wellbeing and safety of many Victorians.

While public intoxication reforms have occurred in most jurisdictions throughout Australia, we accept that this is a complex process which will change the way organisations and authorities respond to people who are intoxicated.

With this in mind, there is a need for a robust commitment across impacted sectors and the broader community to facilitate a smooth transition.

Mr Chris Christoforou CEO of VAADA says, 'in simple terms a health based response to public intoxication is a far better option than a prison cell'.

'The Government should be commended on progressing this substantial reform, which will require a level of commitment relating to building and supporting a new workforce and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is established.'

This reform should be considered in light of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which handed down recommendations over three decades past, including the need for this reform.

Mr Christoforou continues, 'the Department should lead with a public facing communication campaign, providing clarity on the scope, type and availability of support services by region to build public confidence in these changes'.

'Going forward, there will need to be scope for modifications to build in new learnings and changes in demand. Data will need to be captured relating to broader health service engagement, including hospital, paramedic and AOD treatment service demand generated through this reform.

We note that this reform is being delivered in the name of Aunty Tanya Day who needlessly passed away when incarcerated for public intoxication in Castlemaine.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact 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.