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PRESS RELEASE

Surge in alcohol related treatment demand needs to be urgently addressed

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The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) [early insights](#) report into alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment has revealed surging demand for AOD treatment in Victoria.

The report confirms the Victorian treatment sector's experience of an overwhelmed AOD system that is unable to respond to community demand for timely support, and the consensus view that alcohol related harms have increased significantly following the pandemic.

In Victoria, during the financial year 2022/23, there were 92,888 treatment episodes, the highest on record. Moreover, that year also saw the highest number of alcohol related treatment episodes at 30,859 being a 50% increase on the pre pandemic figure of 20,326 (2019/20).

During the pandemic, 70% of Victorian AOD treatment agencies reported an increase in the prevalence and severity of alcohol related treatment demand which is borne out in this AIHW report.

In 2022, fatal overdose data from the [Victorian Coroners Court](#) revealed the highest number of alcohol related fatal overdoses on record, with 173 fatal overdoses that year. Chris Christoforou, CEO of the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) says, 'the consensus view of AOD experts relating to surging alcohol related harm from the pandemic is borne out by this report. We know that waitlists have increased 40% since the pandemic with, on any given day, almost 3500 people waiting for AOD treatment in Victoria. This is now the new normal'.

'With treatment demand at its highest ever levels and alcohol harms surging, there is a pressing need to ensure that people who are seeking help for alcohol and drug dependence can readily access support. To curb this toll and manage soaring demand, there is an immediate need for greater investment in AOD treatment capacity in Victoria'. Alcohol continues to pose a dire cost on the Australian community, with 4.5% of the national disease burden being attributed to alcohol.

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According to Mr Christoforou, 'the billions of dollars in tax collected by the Commonwealth Government from alcohol sales each year, need to be directed back into health services and community programs that address the human cost of these products'.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact David Taylor.

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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.



David Taylor



0413 914 206



dtaylor@vaada.org.au



www.vaada.org.au