

PRESS RELEASE

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[starts]

Treatment Delayed is Treatment Denied

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association's (VAADA) seventh sector demand survey reveals that more Victorians are waiting for alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment than at any time since the pandemic.

Following a survey of 38 service providers across Victoria between June and July 2024, at least 4615 people were waiting for some form of AOD treatment on any given day within that period.

This figure is 93% higher than the September 2020 result of 2385 people on the daily waitlist.

Chris Christoforou, CEO of VAADA says, 'Demand for support from alcohol and other drug issues continues to rise across Victoria. Our members regularly express concerns regarding unmanageable demand for treatment in a constrained environment. The 2024 waitlist numbers demonstrate that many Victorians are denied service when they are at a critical point of their help-seeking journey, which is unsatisfactory.'

In 2022/23, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported a record 92,888 completed AOD treatment episodes in Victoria, with a significant 50% increase in demand for alcohol treatment during the pandemic period.

'VAADA's figures align with the reported treatment demand data released by the AIHW, with this demand likely driven not only by stressors emanating from the pandemic but more broadly anxiety related to the cost of living, the lack of readily available AOD supports and the ease of access to alcohol.'

'Many people experiencing AOD-related harm, including dependence, may end up engaging with acute health services such as emergency departments, as well as the broader tertiary health system through chronic illness related to substance use.'

AOD is attributable to 6.7% of the health burden in Australia.

'It is always best to invest early to reduce long-term demand and costs. This includes keeping people out of more expensive acute health and justice-related interventions. An increase in AOD capacity will result in a significant saving to the government through reducing demand at the tertiary end of the service system.'

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. Daily, these services deal with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption.