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# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Fixing the Foundations of Victoria's Drug Treatment System**

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) is pleased to present its 2025 State Budget Submission *Fixing the Foundations*, which offers a range of solutions to address enduring challenges with the alcohol and other drug (AOD) service system in Victoria, that meet growing demand for treatment and support, and which can respond to new and emerging threats to community wellbeing.

*Fixing the Foundations* includes 39 recommendations for enhancing access to the AOD treatment system across Victoria, including further investment to remedy the fragile opioid pharmacotherapy system and to address service gaps for priority communities including those that are overrepresented in treatment such as justice-involved individuals and First Peoples.

Through its submission, VAADA seeks to support the development of Victoria's AOD Strategy by providing input on the necessary building blocks to enhance the sustained impact of the Victorian Government's plan to improve the safety and wellbeing of all Victorians.

The recommendations are especially relevant given the increasing rates of fatal overdose, with the Victorian Coroners' Court reporting the highest 12-month figure on record for 2023-24, with 601 people fatally overdosing. This is compounded by growing concern about the threat of potent synthetic opioids and other hazardous substances continuing to adulterate illicit drug supplies.

Chris Christoforou, CEO of VAADA, says, 'VAADA remains committed to working with the Victorian Government on initiatives that reduce the growing overdose toll, which has left so many Victorian families grieving.'

'VAADA's 2025 State Budget Submission, provides a roadmap for reducing these harms through a range of pragmatic recommendations that enhance AOD support across treatment, harm reduction as well as allied sectors, to better meet the threats and challenges we face today.'

'These recommendations are integral to the long-term success of the pending Victorian AOD Strategy, the first in three decades. We encourage the Victorian Government to be bold in its vision for the AOD Strategy to reframe the way we approach alcohol and other drug use across our community, to reduce harms, support people to keep well and ensure a better return on investment in a tight budget environment.'

**For more information or to arrange an interview please get in touch with 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.