



Rural and Regional AOD Workforce Snapshot

Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Survey Report 2025

In 2025 the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) conducted its second biennial Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Workforce Survey. This document presents the 2025 snapshot focused on the **rural and regional AOD workforce**. All findings relate to the survey sample of 486 responses and should be interpreted within this context.

Workforce Profile

Workers in rural and regional services represented 29% of the total workforce sample, increasing from 25% in 2023.

Rural and regional workforce diversity differed from metropolitan services:

- Lower gender and sexual diversity
- 13% spoke a language other than English compared to 22% of the broader workforce

Rural and regional workers were more likely to report a Diploma as their highest qualification level, while metropolitan workers were more likely to hold a Master's degree.

Retention

Rural and regional workers were more likely to identify lack of career opportunities and stigma as reasons workers consider leaving the AOD sector. However, they reported lower intentions to leave the sector within the next two years compared to metropolitan workers.

Capacity

Rural and regional workers reported higher occurrences of working with clients presenting with additional needs and experiences:

- Adults using family violence
- Gambling and gaming dependencies
- Clients with forensic involvement

They were also more likely to experience barriers to access training, with 18% citing training location as a barrier compared to 7% of the broader workforce.

Capability

Rural and regional workers were more likely than metropolitan workers to report confidence in:

- Screening, assessing and managing family violence risk (for both adults experiencing and using violence)
- Working effectively with First Nations communities
- Maintaining strong working relationships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

Recommendation 1: Develop a Comprehensive AOD Industry Plan

Rural and regional AOD workers deliver highly complex care within thinner service systems, with fewer recruitment, training and development options. Long-term workforce planning, clear entry and progression pathways, place-based recruitment strategies and accessible professional development are required to support sustainable service delivery across rural and regional Victoria.

Read the seven recommendations and access the full report [here](#)