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2026 Victorian Budget does not address high demand for drug treatment

The 2026 Victorian Budget has seen an increase in the Victorian Government's total investment in alcohol and other drug (AOD) services to a new record of \$415.5M, however the modest increase will not address the systemic limitations that continue to plague access to AOD treatment and support for Victorians.

The recent findings from the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission 25th report of the [National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program](#), reveal that consumption of heroin, cocaine and methylamphetamine have reached record highs in Victoria, illustrating the grave level of illicit drug risk facing Victoria.

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) welcome the continuation of a number of key harm reduction initiatives in the budget and the investment in foundational activities to progress the first horizon of Victoria's Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy. However, VAADA remains deeply concerned about the lack of meaningful action to address entrenched gaps in the system.

VAADA CEO Chris Christoforou says, 'while we are very pleased to see the continuation of funding for critical harm reduction initiatives such as the Victorian Pill Testing Service and new funding for innovative opioid pharmacotherapy programs, the budget will not address the current lengthy wait times for treatment that are being experienced right across Victoria. The consequences of this are real for families and communities and feed into catastrophic outcomes. 584 people fatally overdosed in Victoria in 2024.'

The budget papers reveal that median wait times from assessment to the commencement of AOD treatment are 40 days, twice the government target, while the median wait time from engaging in intake to completing an assessment is 18 days, almost double the government target. Despite the inability to meet treatment demand in a timely manner, funding for core system capability remains unchanged.

'The extensive wait times detailed in the budget papers is not surprising. VAADA reported that 4550 people were waiting to engage in AOD treatment on any day in 2025. There is nothing in this budget to suggest that this will change imminently. With new threats that continue to emerge in the illicit drug market, we can't afford to wait until 2028 for the Victorian Government to address drug treatment demand.'

For more information or to arrange an interview, 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 or others' drug and alcohol use, 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. These services deal with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption daily.