

5 June 2026

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Reforming funding for GP services is necessary to sustain positive health outcomes for cohealth clients

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) acknowledge the release of the [Review into cohealth's General Practice and Related Services](#). However, we remain concerned by the incongruence in findings between the way GP services are funded and the expectation on community health providers to deliver financially sustainable GP services to people experiencing complex health inequities.

VAADA's submission to the Review noted that 'cohealth's service model provides a unique offer which directly addresses (systemic) barriers through integrated, low-threshold, trauma-informed care that links primary health, pharmacotherapy, mental health and broader social supports. Critically, cohealth provides primary care to a large cohort of people who use drugs and experience dependence, who may otherwise not engage with primary healthcare services at all. For many people, cohealth represents a trusted entry point into the health system.'

The Review's recommendations that 'cohealth management set clear revenue targets for GPs that are consistent with revenue streams' fail to value the expertise of GPs who choose to work at cohealth. Further, the recommendation that cohealth co-design 'a single model of care for all their GP clinics' does not recognise the diversity of communities that cohealth works across, including diversity in substance dependence and co-occurring issues.

Chris Christoforou, CEO of VAADA, says, 'It's disappointing that the Review has sought to sheet home the blame to cohealth for a universal model of primary health that continues to fail people who use drugs. VAADA's own data shows that only 1% of referrals into AOD treatment in Victoria each year are made by GPs. Finding a GP who is willing to provide suitable care to people with addiction remains an ongoing challenge across our State. Given this context, recommending that cohealth show cause why they should not be investigated by the Victorian Health Minister for mismanagement is insulting.'

'We continue to urge the Commonwealth Government to reform Medicare to factor in the true cost of providing primary health to people with complex needs, including addiction. We need more GPs to be encouraged to take on patients with alcohol and other drug issues. Until the business model for providing GP services changes, community health providers like cohealth will be required to fill the breach, covering the costliest parts of primary health service to those most in need.'

VAADA supports a forward-looking approach to the issues tabled in the Review, with the priority being on ensuring sustainable GP services to cohealth patients in Collingwood, Fitzroy and Kensington.'

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