



Issues Paper #1

National priorities for the specialist alcohol and other drugs sector

Background

In April 2020, the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC) undertook its first consultation with its members, who collectively represent the specialist alcohol and other drugs sector; the professionals working in it; and people who use or have used alcohol and other drugs, and their families. This consultation focussed on identifying the current needs and priorities of the sector in the federal sphere.

Whilst not an exhaustive list, the key priorities outlined below constitute the areas of reform identified by the sector which have the greatest potential for achieving positive change. These are the priorities which will inform AADC's areas of focus for the period to 2022.

Key priorities 2020-2022

Building sector capacity and capability

- Implementation of the findings of the 2014 *New Horizons Report* to ensure specialist alcohol and other drugs treatment services are funded commensurate with community need.
- Ongoing delivery of Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplementation to ensure the sector's capacity to attract and retain skilled and qualified staff to deliver quality treatment outcomes.
- Indexation of federal funding of specialist treatment services to keep pace with the costs of inflation.
- Funding certainty through implementation of performance-based contract extensions and introduction of minimum two years' notice on funding expiration or re-tendering processes.
- A national workforce strategy, designed and implemented in partnership with the sector, to ensure a specialist alcohol and other drugs workforce of skilled professionals able to meet current and future community need.

Reducing red-tape and regulatory complexity

- Harmonisation of federal commissioning and contracting practices to ensure consistent approaches across funding agencies whilst allowing for locally-based service planning and decision-making.
- Consistent and streamlined reporting and regulatory requirements that maximise funder value and minimise the cost of compliance.
- Improved communication and coordination across jurisdictions to ensure complementary approaches to funding allocation, designed in consultation with the specialist sector.



- Greater flexibility in funding contracts to maximise the ability of services to adapt programs and entry criteria in response to changes in context and community need.

Connecting evidence to outcomes

- Greater coordination between the practice, policy and research arms of the sector, ensuring the research agenda is informed by practice experience and improving research translation into policy and practice settings.
- Investment in innovation and the design and evaluation of new program and policy models, informed by national and international practice and evidence of outcomes.
- Expansion of available treatment modes and models through the public health system, to meet the diverse needs and priorities of people experiencing dependence on alcohol and other drugs.
- Recognition of the distinct role of specialist alcohol and other drugs services, delivered separately from mental health services and in collaboration with mental health service providers where alcohol and other drugs and mental health issues are co-occurring.
- Promoting a health-focussed approach to alcohol and other drugs policy which minimises harms associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs and supports the health and wellbeing of people who use or have used alcohol and other drugs, their families and the communities within which they live.

About us

The Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC) is the national peak body representing the alcohol and other drugs sector, comprising: specialist health services working to prevent and reduce harms which can be associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs; practitioners working in alcohol and other drugs treatment settings and the areas of prevention and early intervention; researchers and policy specialists dedicated to building the evidence-base to support robust and evidence-based practice and programs; and people who use or have used alcohol and other drugs, and their families.

Our purpose

We work to advance health and public welfare through achievement of the lowest possible levels of alcohol and other drug related harm by promoting effective, efficient and evidence-informed prevention, treatment and harm reduction policies, programs and research at the national level.

The issues paper series

This is the first of AADC's periodical issues papers, through which it publishes and promotes the views and priorities of the specialist alcohol and other drugs sector.

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