



Australian 
Alcohol
& Other
Drugs Council

**Driving system change through
partnership: National AOD peak
body advocacy**

Melanie Walker, CEO, AADC



What is the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC)?

The Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC) is the national peak body representing the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector.

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

AADC's founding members comprise each state and territory peak body for the AOD sector (including WANADA), other national peak bodies relating to the AOD sector, and professional bodies for those working in the AOD sector.



What is the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADDC)?

Through our members, AADC represents:

- over 550 specialist health services working to prevent and reduce harms which can be associated with the use of AOD, including more than 80% of the non-government organisations that receive federal funding to deliver services and support to people using AOD;
- more than 1600 specialist practitioners working in AOD services in the areas of prevention and early intervention, as well as all treatment settings;
- researchers and policy specialists dedicated to building the evidence-base to support robust, high impact practice and programs; and
- people who use or have used AOD, and their families.



What do we stand for? AADDC's Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Key Priority Areas:

- Improved sector funding, capacity and coordination
- AOD sector inclusive national governance structure
- Workforce support and development
- Keeping people out of the criminal justice system



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Engagement with Parliamentary Processes

Our recent 2025-26 Pre-Budget submission and submission to the *Inquiry into the health impacts of AOD in Australia* outline a series of evidence-informed recommendations for action by the Australian Government in both the short and longer terms, that are based on several years of sector-wide consultation.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Opportunities to address Key Challenges

2025 is a year of opportunities to address long-standing problems for the AOD sector in Australia:

- Policy discussions and formulation ahead of the 2025 Federal Election
- Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport's inquiry into the health impacts of AOD in Australia
- Evaluation of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care's Drug and Alcohol Program
- Scoping work currently being undertaken by the Department for the next iteration of the National Drug Strategy



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

Every year in Australia - for at least the past decade - almost half a million people are turned away from AOD treatment because of a lack of capacity in the sector.

During that same time period, the number of drug-related deaths has gone from exceeding to now being around double the national road toll.

So, while each and every year around half a million Australians have been denied treatment for an AOD problem, the number of people who die drug-related deaths each year has doubled.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

Numerous reports and Parliamentary inquiries have recommended a greater investment in demand and harm reduction measures.

The Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's 2024 report on the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem recommended that an evaluation of the current National Drug Strategy include a review by the Australian Government, in consultation with State and Territory governments, of the current resourcing for the three pillars of the Strategy, and that should the differences still be substantial, consideration should be given to increasing funding for demand and harm reduction measures.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

Subsequent to that report being tabled, a report by UNSW's Drug Policy Modelling Program found that expenditure by governments on AOD treatment was less than half that spent on law enforcement, with prevention and harm reduction initiatives receiving significantly less than that.

The report also highlighted that the proportions of government expenditure going to each of these areas had remained very much the same for at least the last twenty years.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

Meanwhile, demand for AOD services has been increasing, with numerous government and media reports exploring the dangers of unregulated private and for profit AOD services that have popped up to meet community demand in the absence of there being enough capacity in the high quality and more accountable government-funded AOD sector.

At the same time, the implementation of the National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services has been significantly hampered by the disbanding of critical national governance structures that previously provided a vehicle for policy, program and funding coordination between Australian and State and Territory governments.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

The Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's report on the challenges and opportunities for law enforcement in addressing Australia's illicit drug problem also recommended that the Australian Government re-establish a national governance structure under the National Cabinet architecture, bringing together representatives across the Commonwealth, States and Territories, to oversee the implementation of the National Drug Strategy moving forward.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

The answers to the well-documented problems facing the AOD sector - and its capacity to deliver services to Australians who desperately need them – are well established and quite clear:

- **Funding and coordination for implementing National Drug Strategy priorities needs to be enhanced.**
- It's not that currently funded services are doing a bad job. It's simply that there aren't enough of them and they are not adequately and sustainably funded to meet increasing community demand.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

Equity of access and coverage of services in rural, regional and remote areas also needs particular attention.

Given that none of these matters sit exclusively within the remit of Australian or State and Territory governments, bringing together the relevant Ministers, Departments and non-government representatives to undertake joint planning and coordination is crucial.



AADC Advocacy in the National Context: Key Messages for 2025

In light of the multiple current opportunities for new policy development and directions at the national level, we see 2025 as the year for national action.

We aren't just coming to governments with problems. We are also offering practical solutions based on evidence, expertise and experience.



Thank you and contact details 😊

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