

Media Release



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA (ADCA) (Administrator Appointed) DEFUNDED

Funding for the Alcohol and other Drugs Council (ADCA), the national peak body representing organisations and workers in the sector, has been axed by the assistant Minister for Health, Senator Fiona Nash.

ADCA was notified yesterday of the decision to cut core funding for its day to day operations and individual projects; this prompted an emergency meeting of the ADCA Board last night where directors unanimously agreed to put the organisation into voluntary administration.

ADCA has been funded continuously as the national peak for nearly half a century. As the latest casualty in the new coalition government's austerity drive, the impact of this decision will be felt across the community according to the organisation's patron, Professor Ian Webster AO. "In 46 years, this is the only government that has decided it can do without ADCA's advice," Professor Webster said.

Governments of all persuasions have for years approached ADCA for advice on alcohol and other drug (AOD) matters, trusting its reputation as a reliable, balanced source. While such advice may not have always been palatable to them, it has always been unbiased and evidence based.

"The government's decision is a devastating blow to the sector and undermines years of work to minimise alcohol and other drug-related harm across the Australian community. It effectively erases decades of corporate knowledge – and leaves the sector without representation at a national level," ADCA Chair Dr Mal Washer said.

ADCA's National Drug Sector Information Service, a repository of nearly 100,000 AOD resources, will effectively shut down as a result.

"This is one of the world's most comprehensive AOD library services which has been accessed for years by other libraries and individuals worldwide. Its contribution to clinical practice and professional development is inestimable," according to ADCA Vice President Professor Alison Ritter.

Other projects and services affected by the funding cut include:

- Drug Action Week, which for 16 years has allowed communities Australia wide to raise awareness and commemorate those working to reduce AOD harm – and the associated National Drug and Alcohol Awards
- The National Inhalants Information Service, the first central online information source for volatile substance misuse
- The Register of Australian Drug and Alcohol Research and,
- Drugfields, a new project designed to encourage and support workforce development.

"Each of these is highly significant to research, awareness and the sector's future workforce," Ian Webster said. "Workforce sustainability must rank as one of the most important issues of our time – regardless of the sector."

“The government needs to reconsider its shortsighted decision. Every day, media outlets are full of stories of AOD related violence, crime, the disadvantaged, homelessness and poverty. The cost to the community is crippling, yet governments seem oblivious to it.

“One major group affected by serious AOD-related harm is our first Australians. The Prime Minister wants to be a Prime Minister for Aboriginal Australia. He needs to understand how this decision will further alienate the peoples he claims he wants to represent,” Professor Webster said.

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