

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Australia has been served with dedication and selflessness by the Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia (ADCA) from when it began 50 years ago.

You will be saddened and disappointed, as I was, to learn that after such a long period of leadership and working collaboratively - but honestly – with every government during this period, the current government has drawn a line in the sand. ADCA will no longer receive funding from the Government.

The Board told me this was totally unexpected and it came as a surprise when delegates of the Board met with the Senator Nash's senior staff yesterday. The details will emerge when the Administrator appointed by the Board reports on the findings of his investigations.

I recall the remarkable people who were there at the beginning of ADCA; there are too many to name but they came from all walks of life; they represented families and those who had directly experienced the harms of alcohol and/or drugs, as well as the professions, business, religions, service men and women, trade-unions and the nascent NGOs of that time.

Dr Neal Blewett, one-time Minister for Health and one-time President of ADCA, said in an address to an ADCA Annual General Meeting, that those who work in the drug and alcohol field were the most committed group of people in health he had worked with. It is true - those who work at the front-line are today's saints – tough problems, tough working environments and tough funding. ADCA has always been the advocate for the hard edge of front-line engagement and it is the organisation to which we have all turned at times for guidance, direction and support.

For our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities alcohol and drugs have been a central problem. From the very start ADCA has had, and continues to have, strong and respectful relationships with Aboriginal leaders. They have been integral to ADCA's leadership and its workings.

I could relate how ADCA helped the armed services, therapeutic communities, early intravenous drug user organisations, started early research and policy development (Michael Kirby, Nan Waddy and others - on the early days of cannabis) and provided support and training for community organisations. And more widely ADCA engaged with the wide sectors of civil society – ACOSS, APHA, Families Australia, MHCA, FARE, ADF, the professions – the list could go on: because Australia's dance with alcohol and drugs needs a wider social and public health effort than can be encompassed by the drug and alcohol sector alone.

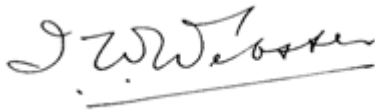
None of this spirit must be lost. This generosity must prevail, and it will.

The Directors have told me of their absolute commitment to ADCA and the

purposes and principles it has espoused through its history. The Board will not give in. They said, "We are NGO people, we know how to survive, we can change the world!" I was so proud of them.

Everyone in the drug and alcohol sector, and the civil society beyond, will rally, I hope, to support the continuation of a national organisation speaking on behalf of the most marginalised in our society and the people who work to set them free from addiction and related problems.

With my good wishes to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Webster', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ian Webster

Patron, Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia

P.S. Should you wish to express a view to the relevant Commonwealth Government Ministers the contacts are: -

senator.nash@aph.gov.au<<mailto:senator.nash@aph.gov.au>> and
peter.dutton.MP@aph.gov.au<<mailto:peter.dutton.MP@aph.gov.au>>