



## Network of Australian State and Territory Alcohol and Other Drug Peak Bodies: Federal Election 2016 Position Document

The Network of Australian State and Territory Alcohol and Other Drug Peak Bodies (the Peaks Network) call for genuine leadership from federal political parties to guide a strategic, collaborative, innovative and effective approach to addressing alcohol and other drug issues across Australia.

People, families and communities across Australia experience harm related to alcohol and other drugs. Contributing factors and barriers to treatment are varied. These issues are not isolated, and impact the entire health and human services sector.

Federal leadership by every political party is needed to deliver a proactive, evidenced and considered approach to alcohol and other drug issues. Such an approach must be inclusive and supported by collaboration across sectors, jurisdictions and the community.

**The Peaks Network call for federal leadership to release each parties' alcohol and other drug policy statements.**

**The Peaks Network call for federal leadership to meet with representatives from the Peaks Network, to discuss the alcohol and drug issues impacting the community and the alcohol and other drug sector, and how these can be addressed.**

### 1. Strategic Leadership

#### *National Drug Strategy*

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Australia does not have a (current) contemporary National Drug Strategy, it having lapsed in 2015.

However, after seven iterations of a national strategy over four decades, Australia is in a position to use its extensive experience to inform the development of a robust and forward looking strategy.

The next National Drug Strategy must outline an integrated and effective purpose for government, communities and services.

To achieve this, the next iteration of the National Drug Strategy must continue to build on the harm minimisation approach and maintain the three pillars of harm reduction, demand reduction and supply reduction pillars. To be effective, these pillars must be:

- balanced and equitably resourced;
- supported by initiatives that are grounded in the current evidence base;
- informed (supported) by appropriate data and include clear outcome measures; and

- managed by a formalised governance structure that engages the alcohol and other drug services sector.

The draft National Drug Strategy 2016-2025 was released for consultation in 2015. However, the Peaks Network consider the draft document to be insufficient in addressing the above points.

**The Peaks Network call for federal leadership to declare its commitment to maintaining the three pillars, urgently revise the draft National Drug Strategy 2016-2025 and make the implementation of a revised strategy a priority for the next term of government.**

### ***Ice Taskforce and National Ice Action Strategy***

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The Turnbull Government's response to the National Ice Taskforce Final Report committed to inject \$241.5 million into alcohol and other drug treatment services across Australia. The same report found current treatment services were unable to keep up with demand and suggested the number of treatment places should be increased. The Australian Government Drug Policy Modelling Program's *New Horizons* report found that demand for drug and alcohol treatment is at least double the available places. It also estimated that there is unmet demand for alcohol and other drug treatment for between 200,000 and 500,000 people in any one year.

While the funding injection is a welcomed contribution towards meeting service demand. Substantial further funding will be required for services to meet the demand for treatment within the community.

**The Peaks Network call on federal leadership to continue to build on existing funding commitments to address compounding community demand for services.**

## **2. Collaboration**

A range of social, economic, health and environmental factors contribute to alcohol and other drug misuse. There are an equally broad number of barriers to people trying to access treatment.

To implement effective policy requires coordination and targeted approaches to issues that cross communities, sectors and jurisdictions. As such, meaningful consultation and collaboration must underpin all government activity. It is also important that on matters that impact alcohol and other drugs, all health and human services policies have an integrated and strategic approach.

**The Peaks Network call on federal leadership to ensure the design and delivery of all alcohol and other drug initiatives are underpinned by evidence, with broad and effective collaboration.**

## **3. Capacity Building and Funding**

The 2016 Federal Budget outlined changes to the Department of Health's Flexible Funds program, including paused indexation, amended funding arrangement guidelines and funding being removed from specific program streams. This will result in approximately \$182.2 million in funds being removed from the program over three years. Any cuts to the drug and alcohol components of the Flexible Funds program will impact negatively on the provision of alcohol and other drug services.

In 2015 the report of a recent review of the alcohol and other drug treatment system in Australia highlighted the significant return on investment for alcohol and drug treatment, finding for every \$1 invested in treatment services, more than \$7 is returned to the community through health and social benefits. The same report found current treatment services were unable to keep up with demand and suggested the number of treatment places should be increased.

It is important that federal leadership recognise the valuable role of the sector within the community and give it the means and certainty to deliver its services to those seeking treatment.

**The Peaks Network call on federal leadership to commit to ensuring any cuts to the Flexible Funds Program do not impact on the alcohol and other drug sector.**

An effective, efficient and sustainable sector is key to the ongoing delivery of services to alcohol and other drug clients and their communities. A number of capacity building projects are currently accessed by alcohol and other drug agencies to improve outcomes and develop their capacity to work with people who have complex needs.

It is important that the ongoing capacity building of the alcohol and other drugs sector is supported by federal leadership in both policy and practice.

**The Peaks Network call on federal leadership to ensure its policies and funding commitments promote capacity building, and promote long term planning and sustainability in the alcohol and other drugs sector.**

## Summary of Recommendations

The Peaks Network call for federal leadership to:

1. Release each parties' alcohol and other drug policy statements.
2. Meet with representatives from the Peaks Network, to discuss the alcohol and drug issues impacting the community and the alcohol and other drug sector, and how these can be addressed.
3. Declare its commitment to maintaining the three pillars, urgently revise the draft National Drug Strategy 2016-2025 and make the implementation of a revised strategy a priority for the next term of government.
4. Continue to build on existing funding commitments to address compounding community demand for services.
5. Ensure the design and delivery of all alcohol and other drug initiatives are underpinned by evidence, and broad and effective collaboration.
6. Commit to ensuring any cuts to the Flexible Funds Program do not impact on the alcohol and other drug sector.
7. Ensure its policies and funding commitments promote capacity building, and promote long term planning and sustainability in the alcohol and other drugs sector.

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