



Consumer Participation Forum Report

***The forum was held on 25 July 2014
at Parkroyal Darling Harbour, Sydney***

The Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) is the peak organisation for the non government drug and alcohol sector in NSW.

NADA's goal is to support non government drug and alcohol organisations in NSW to reduce the alcohol and drug related harm to individuals, families and the community.

PO Box 2345, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
p. (02) 9698 8669 f. (02) 9690 0727 w. www.nada.org.au

INTRODUCTION

The Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (NADA) is the peak organisation for the non government drug and alcohol sector in NSW.

Our goal is to advance and support non government drug and alcohol organisations in NSW to reduce the alcohol and drug related harm to individuals, families and the community.

NADA provides a range of programs and services that focus on sector representation and advocacy, workforce development, information management and data collection, governance and management support plus a range of capacity development initiatives. NADA represents over 100 organisational members that provide a broad range of services in the Alcohol and other Drug Sector including residential, community-based treatment and aftercare.

Further information about NADA and its programs is available on the NADA website at www.nada.org.au.

OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM

On the 25th July 2014, NADA and The Lyndon Community hosted a forum on consumer involvement in drug and alcohol services. The forum was an opportunity to explore the successes and challenges in approaches, and to support services in further developing their practices.

Forum learning objectives

1. Explore and increase consumer involvement in services through sharing positive experiences and challenges
2. Find out where the sector is at locally, and what is happening internationally to assess practice examples for fit within the Australian context
3. Hear practical approaches to consumer participation from the NSW drug user group
4. Explore what support tools are available and what may be required
5. Focus test a consumer participation tool developed by NADA.

FORUM OUTCOMES

The forum was facilitated by Brian Serna from the USA who is a licensed professional Clinical Counsellor, and Alcohol and Drug Counsellor, International trainer and consultant in evidence based practices and cultural issues in behavioural healthcare. The day was attended by 21 participants, representing 13 non government drug and alcohol organisations and a representative from the NSW mental health consumer group.

At the start of the day participants indicated their desired outcomes for the forum, these included:

- Practical ideas to take back to the workplace
- Engagement/participation that is meaningful
- Discuss ethical considerations, such as confidentiality
- Role clarification (volunteers, peer workers, family)
- Reduce stigma in the community/sector
- Practical incentives for consumers
- Retaining consumers
- Creating/maintaining a community with technology
- Strategies for government and organisational level participation and representation
- How to prepare consumers to participate in new roles. Focus groups, forums, etc.

Whilst the forum did not have the capacity to respond to some of these items, this report will be used as a tool to further progress consumer participation initiatives.

Participants were provided with examples of consumer involvement from the USA, New Zealand and Australia, as well as providing a policy and program context for NSW. This was followed by participants describing the current situation in their services, including the successes and challenges.

The forum also included a workshop from NUAA on practical approaches to consumer participation in drug and alcohol services. All organisations that attended received a copy of NUAA's Consumer Participation Kit.

NADA focus tested a consumer participation workplace audit tool, which is available in the *Useful Resources* section of this report.

Whilst initially there was a sense that participants felt that very little was being done, there was a slow realisation throughout the day that the sector had already embarked on the development of consumer participation practices. Additionally there was enthusiasm to keep moving it forward.

Recommendations from participants

In addition to the desired outcomes that were not covered at the forum, participants provided the following recommendations:

1. NADA to develop tools and templates to support consumer participation activities in the sector, including exploring having services publicly sign on to improve consumer participation practices within their services ("a pledge").
2. Get consensus on language in the sector, and in partnership with other sectors. Particularly 'consumer' and 'recovery'.
3. Initiate a train the trainer program to reduce stigma and discrimination. Having a trainer in service providers and including the training as part of induction and orientation, not only drug and alcohol services, but any health service.
4. Promote and disseminate positive stories to encourage and support other services.

Useful resources

NADA has developed a [Consumer Participation Audit Tool](#) to assist in describing the level of participation currently occurring at your service. It will also help identify activities which create greater levels of consumer participation.

NADA has also developed a [Consumer Participation Consent Form](#) to support organisations engage with consumers about the level of participation they are interested in.

Also look out for the consumer participation policy template in the revised NADA Policy Toolkit coming soon.

Guidelines

[A Guide to Consumer Participation in NSW Drug and Alcohol Services](#)

This NSW Ministry of Health guide from 2005, provides a set of principles to assist staff in facilitating consumer access to drug and alcohol services in NSW. These guidelines are currently under review.

Reports

[Treatment Service Users Project \(TSU\) Phase One Report](#)

[Treatment Service Users Project \(TSU\) Phase Two Final Report](#)

[Voices on choices: working towards consumer-led alcohol and drug treatment](#)

[Nothing About Us Without Us Report](#)

Local and international resources

[Straight from the Source: A Practical Guide to Consumer Participation in the Victorian Alcohol and Other Drug Sector.](#)

[The Peer Model Manual](#): The manual contains three modules - Peer Helper Training; Experts by Experience and Speakers Bureau. Each module addresses a specific way in which consumers can be involved in the sector

[Consumer Participation Resource Kit.](#)

The Consumer Participation Resource Kit from Victoria contains information on ways to engage with service users, to listen to their views and to develop strategies based on their advice with the aim of improving services

[Consumer and Peer Roles in the Addiction Sector](#) (NZ)

This document creates discussion around the roles and activities of the consumer and peer workforce in New Zealand

[Consumers Contribute to the Addiction Sector in More Ways Than One](#) (NZ)

A factsheet to introduce the sector to existing and newly emerging consumer and peer roles within treatment

[Involving Service Users Toolkit.](#) (UK)

[Drug User Involvement in Treatment Decisions](#) (UK)

This report discusses the involvement of drug users in making decisions about their treatment

FORUM FEEDBACK

Number of participants: 21

Number of evaluations received: 13 (61%)

Service location:

Metro	24%
Regional	10%
Rural or remote	0%
State-wide	27%

Participant feedback	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overall the forum was a worthwhile event?	15%	70%	15%		
The forum was well organised, facilitated and allowed for appropriate discussion time?	15%	77%	8%		
During the forum I felt that I had an opportunity to express the views of my organisation?	15%	77%	8%		
The forum was useful and appropriate to my organisation	15%	62%	23%		
Do you feel more prepared to implement consumer participation activity in your organisation?	15%	62%	23%		

Participants indicated that the two most useful things they got from the forum were:

The majority of participants reported that the opportunity to hear the strategies, experiences and challenges of other services providers as one of the most useful things they got from the forum. In addition, looking at other resources to support consumer participation, such as the NUAA Consumer Participation Kit and the NADA Workplace Audit Tool. Other comments included hearing from people with lived experience who are working in the sector and the alumni approach from The Bourke Street Project.

Other comments:

“Strategies to implement consumer participation in the workplace to improve service outcomes and learning how other services currently undertake consumer participation”

“That it is a multifaceted and ongoing process, as consumers’ situations change as the world/society changes”

“The need for consumer feedback in regards to my service output and what consumers feel they need”

Suggestions as to how the forum could have been improved included:

Participants suggested that forum could have been improved by ensuring that sessions kept to the agenda times, highlighting more successful strategies, and also ensuring that there is diversity in responses across service type and settings in the sector.

Other comments:

“Keep the conversation alive, this is just the beginning.”

“Definitions of terms and what we are talking about today would have been at the start... for me consumer participation is different to peer education and peer workers.”

“Perhaps try and involved somehow consumer participation for those who have been involved with crime/police/law”

Reflecting on the content of the day, participants were asked what was needed to be done to increase consumer participation practices:

In their organisation

Suggestions included involving and consulting with consumers more, being consistent across services, have a suggestion box and organising consumer forums for feedback.

“More emphasis on ‘meaningful participation’ and consumers as networkers.”

“Including a person with lived experience of substance use in our consumer committee (coinciding with mental illness).”

In the sector

Addressing stigma and discrimination was seen as fundamental to change, increasing capacity of consumers to participate, funding, and more discussion and awareness in the workplace.

“AOD consumer people with lived experience to provide a consumer perspective on MHDAO Committees, working groups and NADA Board/Management Committee.”

“Get young consumers to participate which can encourage young people to start using services if they don’t already do so.”

Additional resources, information needs or activities as a follow up to the forum:

Participants reported that they would like more resources, tool and examples of successfully implemented approaches.

“The participants in this forum could be invited back to discuss success or barriers to implementing consumer participation with their service.”

“See if consumers would like to run/facilitate a forum for workers/”professionals” that addresses consumer participation and whatever else they see fit.”

“Linking in the national health consumer participation (broader than AOD sector).”

 **Additional comments provided included:**

“This consumer participation forum would be beneficial for students studying social work, community work, allied health who are soon to graduate and enter the workforce. I, as a student have found this forum very beneficial as it helps an open-mind thrive. I do not understand why there is no funding for this, perhaps tying it in with tertiary education bodies, speaking with course convenors?”

“Thank you! Great to see this conversation happening and I look forward to the next steps!”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NADA would like to thank all members that participated on the day and their commitment to improve service outcomes for consumers.

NADA would also like to acknowledge the support and input of The Lyndon Community and NUAA into the forum, as well as Brian Serna for facilitating the day.



NADA CONTACT DETAILS

Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies
PO Box 2345
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Ph. (02) 9698 8669

www.nada.org.au