



NADA
network of alcohol & other drugs agencies

Strategic Policy and Advocacy Framework

2009 – 2011

Version 1: October 2009

Updated: January 2011



Purposes and guiding principles

The Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies Inc (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 agencies in NSW to reduce the alcohol and drug related harm to individuals, families and the community.

An outcome area of NADA's Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011 is *providing leadership and advocacy on drug and alcohol policy and service system development*.

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to NADA in its coordination of and participation in state and federal policy processes. This document also articulates NADA's priorities and position on a range of key areas related to drug and alcohol policy development and implementation.

To fulfil its policy and advocacy role, NADA will:

- Encourage member feedback and participation in its policy and advocacy work and provide advice and support to members on policy and advocacy-related issues.
- Liaise with government, politicians and other policy makers directly and through committee and advisory group representation and written submissions.
- Collaborate strategically with other organisations within the drug and alcohol sector and broader human services sector through joint submissions and advocacy papers or participation in relevant policy forums.
- Engage with the media to promote the work and views of the non government drug and alcohol sector in NSW.

Policy context

The non government drug and alcohol sector in NSW exists within a broader state and federal policy context. Many organisations receive core program funding from both state and federal government departments. Priority areas for program and service delivery are also largely influenced by state and federal policies. The underlying principle of drug and alcohol policy in Australia is harm minimisation. Harm minimisation involves a comprehensive approach to reducing drug-related harm involving a balance between demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction strategies¹.

At a federal level, the major drug and alcohol policy document is the *National Drug Strategy: Australia's Integrated Framework 2004 - 2009*. The mission of the strategy is to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Australian society. Evaluation and review of the National Drug Strategy is currently in progress for the period 2004 - 2009 and a new framework will be introduced in 2010. At a state level, the *NSW Drug and Alcohol Plan 2006 - 2010* gives policy direction to state drug and alcohol service delivery. The main aims of the plan are to improve service delivery, promote evidence-based treatment and improve workforce capacity.

With the change in federal government in 2007, a number of national review processes have commenced, the results of which are likely to have implications for the non government drug and alcohol sector. These include:

Preventative Health: A National Preventative Health Taskforce was established in 2008 to provide advice to government and health providers on preventative health programs and strategies and support the development of a National Preventative Health Strategy. The Strategy was released in mid 2009 and will focus on tackling the burden of chronic disease currently caused by obesity, tobacco, and excessive consumption of alcohol. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency was formed at the end of 2010.

National Health and Hospital Reform: The Commonwealth Government has established a National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to provide advice on benchmarks and reforms to the Australian health system which could be implemented in both the short and long term, to address a range of challenges, including access to services, the growing burden of chronic disease, population ageing and escalating costs and inefficiencies. A long-term health reform plan to provide sustainable improvements in the performance of the health system is due in mid 2009 which will address the need to better integrate and coordinate care across all aspects of the health sector, bring a greater focus on prevention to the health system, improve the provision of health services in rural areas, improve Indigenous health outcomes and provide a well qualified and sustainable health workforce into the future.

Australia's Future Tax System: A comprehensive review of Australia's tax system is to be completed by the end of 2009 which will examine the current system and make recommendations to create a tax structure that will position Australia to deal with current and future demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges and enhance Australia's economic and social outcomes. The Review is being led by Dr Ken Henry.

The Productivity Commission's study into the contribution of the not-for-profit sector: The objectives of this study, completed in January 2010, were to:

- assess measures of the contribution of the not for profit sector and how these can be used to improve government policy and programs and optimise the sector's contribution
- identify unnecessary impediments to the efficient and effective operation of not for profit organisations and measures to improve their contributions
- consider ways in which the delivery and outcomes of government funded services by not for profit organisations could be improved
- examine recent changes in the relationships between government, business and community organisations and whether there is scope to enhance these relationships so as to improve outcomes delivered by the sector
- examine the impact of the taxation system on the ability of not for profit organisations to raise funds and the extent to which the tax treatment of the sector affects competitive neutrality.

Policy coordination and engagement

NADA's Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011 articulates a number of guiding principles that inform the organisation's approach. Specific principles that relate to the way in which NADA will undertake policy coordination and engagement are:

Members' views and needs are the basis of NADA's advocacy program.

NADA is committed to best practice in service delivery based on current research. It promotes and supports the implementation of best practices in the non government drug and alcohol sector.

Roles and responsibilities

The CEO, Director Planning and Strategy and Deputy Director Planning and Strategy have key roles in coordinating NADA's policy and advocacy work. The three positions are primarily responsible for internal policy coordination and planning. The CEO is delegated with the operational management of NADA and as such, is responsible for overall coordination of NADA staff involvement in policy and advocacy work. The CEO is also the delegated spokesperson for the organisation as agreed with the NADA Board of Directors. Both the Director Planning and Strategy and Deputy Director Planning and Strategy are responsible for committee representation and developing or contributing to written submissions and position papers as relevant. Additionally, the Deputy Director Planning and Strategy provides secretariat support to the NADA Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee as well as being an active member of that committee.

Other staff from the NADA Program and Business Units, particularly Program Managers and Project Officers, support the organisation's policy and advocacy function through committee representation and contribution to submissions or policy papers as relevant. NADA has recognised the need for a staff member with a dedicated policy function in order to expand NADA's capacity in policy and advocacy work and thus, securing funding for a policy officer position at NADA is a priority for the organisation.

The NADA Board of Directors is responsible for guiding NADA's overall strategic direction and priorities. A subcommittee of the NADA Board of Directors has been established to act as a forum for discussion and analysis of key policy and advocacy issues for the NADA membership. The subcommittee provides a report back to the Board of Directors on a bi-monthly basis. Communication mechanisms also exist to inform the subcommittee of the policy and advocacy related work of NADA staff and conversely, NADA staff are kept informed of the work of the Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee.

The Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee consists of:

- Representatives from the NADA Board of Directors
- Representatives from the NADA membership with appropriate expertise
- External representatives selected for specific expertise such as other non government peak and advisory bodies e.g. Council of Social Services of NSW and relevant research bodies e.g. Drug Policy Modelling Program.

- NADA staff responsible for policy and advocacy coordination

Communication and engagement

Members: NADA communicates regularly with its members to seek input and feedback into its policy and advocacy work and also to disseminate information on its policy and advocacy activities. Specific communications mechanisms through which this occurs are detailed below.

Government: NADA seeks to influence the formulation of drug and alcohol public policy and subsequent program implementation through its relationship with government departments at a state and federal level. This may be through committee representation, written submissions and briefings or engagement with the media.

Other policy and advocacy bodies: NADA recognises that it exists within a network of service providers, peak organisations and research bodies who have specific expertise in areas relating to drug and alcohol policy. As such, NADA works in partnership with organisations with an established policy and advocacy function. This includes the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia in which NADA is represented on the ADCA Board of Directors, the ADCA Federal Council and the ADCA Policy Forum and the Council of Social Services of NSW in which NADA is represented on the Forum of Non Government Agencies, the Health Policy Advisory Group and the Sector Development Forum. Other partners and stakeholders are detailed in the NADA Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011.

NADA will communicate its policy and advocacy work to its members and stakeholders through:

- The NADA website: Information on NADA's policy and advocacy work is detailed on the NADA website including NADA's policy priorities and key activities, written submissions and other papers.
- The NADA Advocate: Regular items on NADA's policy and advocacy activities will be included in each edition of the NADA Advocate. This electronic newsletter is produced bi-monthly and distributed to NADA's members and stakeholders.
- Member Email Updates: The member email update template has a section on policy and advocacy to which relevant updates and issues of interest are added.

NADA will seek input and feedback from its members and stakeholders into its policy and advocacy work through:

- A regular program of NADA forums linked to projects and service delivery with a focus on practical skills and resources. This will also include formal consultation meetings about specific policy and advocacy issues as relevant.
- Comment on draft submissions
- Surveys and other targeted communication to provide input into the identification of priority areas

As a peak body, NADA welcomes comments and feedback from its members on policy and advocacy related issues at any time.

Primary policy priorities

Sustainability and development of the non government drug and alcohol service system

NADA's primary policy and advocacy role is focussed on the sustainability and development of the non government drug and alcohol service system. A number of state and national review processes are currently in place that may have a range of implications for the non government drug and alcohol sector including funding models, grants administration and service delivery. NADA views this as an opportunity to develop its advocacy platform by working with the sector to better articulate its service delivery capacity, its future direction and its unique place within the system to provide a range of services including community based prevention and health promotion initiatives, counselling interventions, residential rehabilitation, outreach and aftercare services.

Regarding sustainability of the non government drug and alcohol sector, NADA advocates the following:

- Comprehensive and fundamental reform of grants administration processes is required to reduce the burden on NGOs and provide for more streamlined reporting across funding programs and funding bodies at a state and a federal level. Funding should be increased to non government drug and alcohol service providers to cover the true costs of service delivery including financial and human resources management, administration and reporting.
- Detailed workforce and sector planning at a state-wide and national level in the drug and alcohol and broader human services sector is needed to address issues such as recruitment difficulties, the salary and entitlement disparities between the government and non government sectors and the development of better articulated career pathways for workers in the sector, in particular frontline workers.
- The non government drug and alcohol sector in NSW should receive adequate funding to undertake detailed evaluation processes and ongoing research to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs, particularly for new or pilot programs and contribute to the broader evidence base of drug and alcohol related service delivery.

Key activities for 2009-11

- *NADA will undertake work with its membership to better define its advocacy position on the NGO drug and alcohol service system including the development of a discussion paper and consultation forum. Activities undertaken such as consultation forums, the release of discussion paper and update articles will provide information on State and Federal review processes and their possible implications for the non government sector and invite discussion on how the sector can position itself into the future. This work will receive input from the NADA Policy and Advocacy subcommittee as a key priority.*
- *NADA sat on the steering committee of the Review of Alcohol and Other Drug Non Government Agencies funded by the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office of NSW Health.*

- *As part of the NSW Health NGO Advisory Committee, NADA will sit on the steering committee and provide advice into NSW Health's review of the NGO grants program and advocate for the non government drug and alcohol sector throughout this process.*
- *Representation on the ADCA Policy forum and ADCA Federal Council which held its inaugural meeting in June 2009.*
- *NADA is represented on a number of other committees in which it advocates for the non government drug and alcohol sector including the NSW Health Drug and Alcohol Program Council and the Council subcommittees.*
- *Program advocacy at a state and federal level for changes and reforms to program structure and implementation to better meet the needs of the non government drug and alcohol sector.*

Consumer/service user participation

The non government drug and alcohol sector provides services ranging from prevention, health promotion and early intervention to treatment and aftercare. Due to this diversity, there is a corresponding range of people who may be considered consumers or service users of non government drug and alcohol services such as young people, families and people seeking treatment for a drug and/or alcohol issue.

Our approach to consumer participation and drug and alcohol policy is guided by the following:

- Improved strategies for service user involvement need to be developed with drug and alcohol service providers and policy makers.
- Increased resources need to be allocated to strengthen the capacity of both service providers and service users to enhance the participation of service users in service provision, development and planning.
- Peer-based drug user organisations should continue to be supported as they play an integral role in improving the health and promoting the rights and views of drug users, views that are often marginalised due to the often illicit nature of drug using and related activities.

Key activities for 2009-11

- *Consult with and engage the NADA membership to gather information from a range of perspectives on consumer participation in the non government drug and alcohol sector including the range of consumers in our sector and how they can better participate in service development and improvement. This may be achieved through member forums or discussion papers.*
- *Continue to work with NUAA on issues related to service user participation in drug treatment services, particularly related to the NUAA Community Representation Capacity Building Project.*
- *Participate on the NSW Health reference group for the development of a Consumer Advisory Group for the NSW Health Drug and Alcohol Program.*

Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention

- The sustainability of funding is an issue for many organisations providing specific health promotion, prevention and early intervention services. There is a tendency for funding in this area to be short-term project funding which makes program continuation difficult despite demonstration of program effectiveness.
- Further developments in data collection and measuring the impact of health promotion, prevention and early intervention activities.

Key activities for 2009-11

- *A subcommittee of the NADA Board of Directors focussing on health promotion has been established for a number of years. Policy issues relating to health promotion will be referred to this expert subcommittee for their input and action.*
- *Monitor the work of the National Preventative Health Taskforce and Agency to understand the implications and opportunities for the non government drug and alcohol sector.*

Other priority areas

The key policy priority areas identified above will be the focus of NADA's Policy and Advocacy and Health Promotion Subcommittees. NADA is involved in a range of other issues that are relevant to the non government drug and alcohol service system. These policy areas are taken up by NADA staff predominantly through project implementation and evaluation and committee representation. These other policy areas are identified below as well as NADA's key activities in these areas for 2009-2011.

Policy area	Key activities for 2009-2011
Service access and service delivery for Aboriginal people	– Strengthen our relationship with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (including the AHMRC's Aboriginal Health College)
Strengthening the Aboriginal workforce in the non government drug and alcohol sector.	– Establishment and implementation on the Aboriginal traineeships program in NSW (in partnership with NSW Health)
Strengthening family inclusive practice in the non government drug and alcohol sector	– As NADA enters the final phase of the Families and Carers Program, the results and evaluation of program activities will be used to develop recommendations on support and resourcing needs of the sector related to working with families.

<p>Supporting agencies to work with clients experiencing co-occurring mental health issues and improving access to quality mental health care for clients of non government drug and alcohol services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NADA will continue to implement a range of project in this area including the Improved Services Initiative, the No Wrong Door Project, the Mental Illness and Substance Use Change Management Program and the NGO Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Information Management Project. Project feedback and evaluations will feed into NADA's policy and advocacy work - Based on our significant project work in the area of mental health and drug and alcohol or comorbidity, NADA will provide input and recommendations into mental health related policy and program implementation where relevant (e.g. state and federal policy documents/guidelines). - NADA will continue to work closely with the Mental Health Coordinating Council and General Practice NSW to build relationships across and within sectors.
<p>Strengthened communication and relationships with the criminal justice sector to improve client access and referral pathways.</p> <p>Skills and capacity development for organisations to work with clients involved in the criminal justice system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NADA will continue to support the roll out of the Community Restorative Centre's (CRC) training on working with clients involved in the criminal justice system as part of the No Bars project, a partnership between NADA and CRC. Agency feedback and evaluation results from this training will be used to develop recommendations to feed into NADA's policy and advocacy program in this area. - Maintain and strengthen partnership activities with CRC.
<p>Increasing access to housing and preventing entry into homelessness for clients of non government drug and alcohol services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NADA represents the non government drug and alcohol sector on a number of committees including the Housing Partners NGO Reference Group and the NSW Homelessness Community Alliance. As part of the Alliance, NADA will be monitoring and providing comment into 2 projects led by NSW Health that are part of the NSW Homelessness Strategic Framework.
<p>Strengthen the capacity of the non government drug and alcohol sector to understand and respond to changes that will be implemented across the state as part of the NSW Government's initiative, <i>Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NADA will monitor and provide input into NSW Health's implementation activities of Keep Them Safe. This will include committee representation, forum attendance and preparing regular activity updates for the NADA membership. - NADA is supporting the rollout of child protection training for drug and alcohol services by NSW Health and the Education Centre Against Violence. Feedback from this training from NADA member agencies and the project evaluation will inform NADA's future policy and advocacy work in this area.

Conclusion

NADA's policy and advocacy work will be guided by the NADA Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011 particularly the outcome area, *providing leadership and advocacy on drug and alcohol policy and service system development*. Performance measures for this outcome area as outlined in the Plan will provide evidence of NADA's success and will be reported on annually.

ⁱ Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (2004). The National Drug Strategy: Australia's Integrated Framework 2004-2009. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia