

People needing alcohol and other drugs services across NSW ignored in the NSW Budget

21 June 2022

After spending in excess of \$10 million dollars on a Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice', the NSW Government has continued to ignore all 109 recommendations handed down by its own Commissioner.

It has been 28 months now since the NSW Government received the recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' from its own Commissioner, Professor Dan Howard SC. The NSW Budget did not provide any response to these recommendations, and the urgent action required to improve access to alcohol and other drugs treatment and tackle the workforce crisis within the sector.

"We are extremely concerned that the failure to respond in this year's budget will mean the government's long-overdue response will become a 'political football' as part of the 2023 State election campaign," the Chief Executive Officer at the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA), the NSW peak body, Robert Stirling, said.

The continued absence of a response—since January 2020—not only pushes frontline workers to breaking point, but causes extraordinary hardship to those people who cannot access help for alcohol or other drug issues, their families and entire communities. Many of whom poured their hearts out during regional consultations. We know from the report that both Aboriginal communities and regional and rural communities have been especially impacted.

While the report was handed down before COVID-19, the pandemic has created a perfect storm for the sector. People often turn to alcohol and other drugs to cope, which has led to increasing demand on our services; while at the same time pandemic restrictions meant there have been fewer beds and services available, and at critical times, even fewer workers.

Mr Stirling said, "A whole of government strategy must be developed over the next 12 months. A strategy that commits to progressive increases in funding for treatment over the next 10 years. Any response must do more to support existing services that are currently struggling, as well as outline and resource the expansion of new treatment and harm reduction services."

NADA is urging the NSW Government to respond to the recommendations from the Special Commission and work with the sector on the development of a strategy and identification of where funds are most needed.

Media contact: Robert Stirling, Chief Executive Officer, on 0421 647 099 or email robert@nada.org.au.

About NADA

The Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) is the peak organisation for the non government alcohol and other drugs sector in NSW. We represent 80 organisational members that provide services in over 100 locations across NSW. They provide a broad range of alcohol and other drugs services including health promotion and harm reduction, early intervention, treatment and continuing care programs. Together, we improve the health and wellbeing of people who use, or have used, alcohol and other drugs across the NSW community. For more information, please visit www.nada.org.au.