

NEW DATA FROM PEAK BODY SHOWS HUGE WAITLIST FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT, CALLS FOR ACTION AT SYDNEY DRUG SUMMIT

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The Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) has released new waitlist data for individuals looking to access alcohol and other drug (AOD) services provided by NGOs.

On any given day during the week of 23 – 27 September 2024, 1,819 people were on waitlists for NGO-provided AOD treatment services. This number climbs to 2,667 when accounting for individuals on multiple waitlists for various service types.

NADA has called on the NSW Government to seize the opportunity presented by the upcoming Sydney Drug Summit (4 and 5 December) to enact meaningful drug and alcohol reform.

Dr Robert Stirling, NADA CEO, said the Government cannot afford to wait months to receive a report before it takes action.

“My chief concern is that we will see a repeat of the NSW Ice Inquiry, where a report is drafted, handed down, but reform does not eventuate,” Dr Stirling said.

“I am calling on the Premier and his Government to show courage and announce a commitment to act at the end of the Summit which puts us on a path towards meaningful reform.

“This cannot be a talk fest filled with platitudes for change. It must lead to real improvements.”

Further analysis released by NADA showcased the impressive achievements of NGO-provided treatment services.

In the 2023/24 financial year, these services helped more than 8,000 people achieve a 75% improvement in their psychological health. Furthermore, 69% of those attending these services reported an improvement in their quality of life, and 40% saw a decrease in the severity of their dependence.

These efforts, however, cannot be sustained without further funding.

Dr Stirling said the Government must commit to drafting a Drug and Alcohol Strategy which has clear priorities, targets and funding plans.

“It’s been 15 years since our last Drug and Alcohol Strategy, and this needs to be a key deliverable from the Summit,” Dr Stirling said.

“It must provide strategic direction across prevention, early intervention, treatment and harm reduction – ensuring that people have access to services where they live that meets their needs.”

The average wait time for residential withdrawal services is a concerning 12 to 26 weeks, with almost a quarter of those waiting enduring delays of this length. These figures likely underestimate the true extent of the problem, as they only reflect those waiting for NGO services and do not include those waiting for public or private options.

Dr Stirling said the state’s outdated approach to alcohol and other drug policy is hurting NSW citizens.

"The current system is failing to deliver positive health outcomes for our community. We need a fundamental shift in our approach to alcohol and other drug policy, one that prioritises health and wellbeing," Dr Stirling said.

"We also need a central agency within the NSW Cabinet Office and Premier's Department to overcome existing silos and streamline the process, ensuring efficient resource allocation, better data collection, and improved accountability."

Dr Stirling said NADA will continue to work collaboratively with the Government.

"We are on the precipice of meaningful alcohol and other drug reform, but we cannot trip at the final hurdle.

"The NSW Government must act decisively and translate the Summit's discussions into concrete policy changes that prioritise community health and wellbeing as soon as possible."

NADA released a [Position Paper and Supplementary Papers](#) in the lead-up to the Drug Summit which included a set of recommendations for the NSW Government.

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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 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.