

NADA MEDIA RELEASE

Recognition and resources for comprehensive mental health and drug and alcohol services

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Following the disturbing episode of *Four Corners* last night titled *Hidden voices*, the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA) is calling for a renewed focus on the state of the mental health and drug and alcohol service systems and the current approaches that perpetuate a focus on hospital beds and acute, crisis-driven services.

Hidden voices highlighted the lack of access to acute mental health care services and the dearth of sub-acute mental health services, supported accommodation and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services in regional areas of Australia. It is the experience of NADA and its membership that the situation in Mackay is replicated in regional areas of NSW. Mr Larry Pierce, Chief Executive Officer of NADA says, “the lack of resources and recognition for the work of community based services in providing sub-acute care and ongoing rehabilitation creates a vicious cycle that exacerbates the strain placed on hospital-based acute care services that already cannot meet the community demand.”

Most importantly, the episode highlighted the incredible strain that the lack of services places on individuals with mental illness and drug and alcohol issues and their families. “These tragic stories represent just how intractable and wicked these problems are but I fully agree with Professors McGorry and Mendoza that we do know the models of care and interventions that work. Adequate resources need to be directed towards these models of care to prevent this from being an ongoing national tragedy,” says Mr Pierce. These models support community based approaches and critically, they intervene early before mental illness and drug and alcohol issues become constant and defining features of a person’s adult life.

Reiterating the comments of Adjunct Professor John Mendoza, NADA strongly calls on the NSW and Federal governments to invest in a comprehensive mental health and drug and alcohol service system that provides for packages of care for consumers predominantly provided in the community rather than the funding of an inadequate number of hospital beds and an insufficient scattering of community based services in NSW and across Australia.

Contact Larry Pierce, NADA CEO on 0411 747 106 or larry@nada.org.au

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 organisations in NSW to reduce the alcohol and drug related harm to individuals, families and the community.
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