

NSW DRUG SUMMIT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHELVE OUTDATED POLICIES

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The forthcoming NSW Drug Summit is an opportunity to shelve outdated drug policies that have failed to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and their families.

That's the verdict from the peak organisation for the non-government drug and alcohol sector in NSW, the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA).

NADA today welcomed the Government's confirmation the NSW Drug Summit will be held over two days in regional NSW in October, and in Sydney on 4th and 5th December, as well as consultations about the Terms of Reference and other matters ahead of this.

NADA Chief Executive, Dr Robert Stirling, said the lack of clear policy direction in recent years and chronic underfunding of community drug and alcohol services had left the sector at crisis point.

"It's time for NSW to move on from punitive approaches to drug policy and focus instead on removing barriers to treatment and ensuring support services are adequately funded."

"This Summit is an opportunity to achieve that much-needed reform, and the sector thanks the Minns Government for proceeding with this proposal as they committed ahead of the last election.

"Access to drug treatment services remains a major challenge for many people and their loved ones, particularly in regional and rural areas of NSW where workforce shortages have been acute for some time.

"We want to see health and wellbeing outcomes – for individuals and the community – at the centre of the Government's agenda, with a focus on advancing evidence-based approaches across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention, treatment and harm reduction."

"We have a wealth of Australian and international evidence that shows what works, including from the ACT and Queensland where progressive drug reform programs are being implemented with success."

"It's vital that decision-makers hear these perspectives at the Drug Summit, along with the perspectives of people with lived experience who are most impacted by reforms," Dr Stirling said.

NADA has called on the Minns Government to focus on addressing stigma and discrimination at the Drug Summit, saying it's a key barrier to people seeking and receiving help to address drug use and limits opportunities to access other services or employment.

"Every day in NSW, stigma and discrimination prevents a person who struggles with drug use from seeking the help they need," Dr Stirling said.

"For people who are already dealing with complex circumstances – lack of housing, education, employment opportunity or community connection – the stigma and discrimination creates a vicious cycle that has serious consequences for the individuals, their children and families, and the broader community.

"Drug use must be primarily treated as a health issue – to shift focus and funding to support approaches that have been proven to work, to improve the lives of the NSW community."

Earlier this year NADA released a Position Paper on the upcoming Drug Summit, [How the upcoming NSW Drug Summit can deliver better outcomes for individuals, families and the community.](#)

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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.