

NADA WELCOMES LEADERSHIP AND NEXT STEPS ON DRUG POLICY REFORM

6 September 2024

Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) CEO, Dr Robert Stirling, welcomes progress towards the NSW Drug Summit including the announcements of Carmel Tebbutt and John Brogden as co-Chairs.

Dr Stirling said the Summit is an opportunity to bring NSW drug policy into line with modern community expectations and address the stigma and discrimination toward people who use drugs and their families.

“Ms Tebbutt and Mr Brogden are both highly regarded, and we look forward to working with them on formulating an evidence-based drug policy that looks beyond the current approaches,” said Dr Stirling.

“We need to learn from the experiences across Australia and overseas to understand if approaches can be applied in the NSW context. We have full confidence that all participants in this process will approach it with open minds and a focus on evidence-based decision-making.

“There also needs to be a focus on dismantling barriers to treatment and adequately funding support services.”

The Government today confirmed the Drug Summit will comprise two regional forums in Griffith on Friday, 1 November and Lismore on Monday, 4 November ahead of a two-day event in Sydney on 4 and 5 December.

“The best health and wellbeing outcomes for all community members must be the priority, that’s why it is so important that the perspectives of people with lived experience and frontline workers are heard by decision makers in this process,” Dr Stirling said.

“Some 45 per cent of NADA’s members provide services across regional and rural NSW, so it’s great that the NSW Government is ensuring that regional voices are heard in this process.”

Bronwyn Hendry, CEO of Directions Health, which provides treatment and support for people who use drugs and community education in Griffith, said she welcomed the Drug Summit coming to regional NSW and the increased investment in drug and alcohol services in regional areas.

“However, there are still significant gaps in terms of geographical reach to the more remote communities,” she said.

“We’d also like to see an increase in harm reduction initiatives and for decriminalisation to be strongly considered following our positive experience with the reform in the ACT.”

Jenna Bateman, Chair of The Buttery, a provider of drug and alcohol services in Northern NSW for more than 50 years, welcomed the forum being held in Lismore.

“We have a first-hand understanding of the devastating and continuing impact of the 2022 floods,” she said. “The Lismore forum will be an opportunity to highlight the complex and unique challenges faced by the Lismore and Northern Rivers community and the need for a comprehensive response to drug, alcohol and mental health issues in the region”.

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](#).

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.