



Community Services
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Ms Jan Burnswood MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Burnswood

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Inebriates Act 1912.

Mission Australia is one of Australia's leading community services organizations with a history of over 140 years working with those experiencing social disadvantage.

The underlying focus of Mission Australia's work is to help individuals and communities strengthen and increase their capacity to help themselves. Mission Australia is developing and delivering new and contemporary services to tackle the social problems facing our society.

Mission Australia has over 340 services around the country providing community and employment support to approximately 200, 000 people each year.

Mission Australia in NSW has experience in operating a number of services for those suffering from addiction and in particular working with those who abuse alcohol.

These clients are frequent users of Mission Australia services for people experiencing homelessness and in both Sydney and Newcastle, Mission Australia has operated Proclaimed Places.

Based on this experience the following comments are made relating to the terms of reference.

1. *The Inebriates Act 1912 and the provision of compulsory assessment and treatment under the Act.*

In extreme circumstances where the life of the person is at severe risk, such a provision would be supported.

This would provide some opportunity for intervention to ensure client safety but without the further engagement with the client, long term commitment and improvement is problematic.

2. *The appropriateness and effectiveness of the Act in dealing with persons with severe alcohol and/or drug dependence who have not committed an offence and persons with such dependence who have committed offences.*

Effectiveness will be largely dependent upon access to and availability of residential facilities with appropriate treatment services provided both in house and on an outreach basis. The current provisions for a Supervising Board of Health and Corrective services would benefit from the inclusion of a representative of non-government agencies and the Department of Housing.

The Partnerships Against Homelessness may have a role in developing a co-ordinated service system with regard to the provisions of the revised Act.

3. *The effectiveness of the Act in linking those persons to suitable treatment facilities and how those linkages might be improved if necessary.*

The terms and provisions of the Act require updating. Linkages with treatment for those with a dependency need to be based on a very quick response time as motivation and opportunities for engagement can be infrequent and short lived.

Treatment options for those with both an alcohol and drug dependence need to be enhanced given the frequency of co-morbidity.

4. *Overseas and interstate models for compulsory treatment of persons with severe alcohol and/or drug dependence including in Sweden and Victoria.*

Reference to other models should include analysis of services in metropolitan, regional, rural & remote areas.

5. *Options for improving or replacing the Act with a focus on saving the lives of persons with severe alcohol and/or drug dependence and those close to them.*

A continuum of care is required, from prevention/early intervention to treatment and rehabilitation. The operation of a revised Inebriates Act needs to be seen as a part of this continuum.

6. *Any other related matter.*

Illegal drug supply – strategies to limit availability continue to be a priority. Access to legal substances not designed for human consumption but which also have health related issues, such as methylated spirits, need to be controlled at point of sale.

Yours sincerely

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