

**Submission
No 106**

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA)
Date Received: 2 December 2020

Attention: Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health

2 December 2020

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales

NADA is the peak organisation for non-government alcohol and other drugs services in NSW. We represent 100 organisational members that provide a broad range of alcohol and other drugs services including health promotion and harm reduction, early intervention, treatment and continuing care programs. Our members are diverse in their structure, philosophy and approach to alcohol and other drugs service delivery.

NADA provided a submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into the provision of drug rehabilitation in regional, rural and remote NSW¹ in December 2017. Many of the recommendations from this inquiry have not been implemented. The Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' that followed also recommended that the NSW Government implement several of the recommendation from the preceding Inquiry. We would urge this Inquiry to ensure that the NSW Government implement the recommendations and support regional, rural and remote communities respond to alcohol and other drug harms.

More recently, NADA was part of a coalition of alcohol and other drug service providers, agencies and peak bodies that developed the submission, *Supporting Investment in Alcohol and Other Drug Services Across Regional, Rural and Remote Australia in Response to COVID-19*². The submission highlighted that the impacts of alcohol and other drug use have been amplified in regional, rural and remote Australia during COVID-19 because:

- Regional, rural and remote areas have fewer services – both generally and specifically in relation to alcohol and other drugs treatment – creating long-term access barriers that make it much harder for any problems associated with the increase in alcohol and other drug use driven by COVID-19 to be met;
- People living in regional, rural and remote areas, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, often need to travel 500+ km to access treatment services. This can be costly and include considerable hardship, and will simply be inaccessible for many. It also makes it very difficult to follow up with clients once they leave the treatment services; and
- Smaller communities can make it more difficult for people to seek help when they need it, due to concerns around stigmatisation, confidentiality, and privacy.

¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/59348/0025%20NADA.pdf>

² https://www.svha.org.au/ArticleDocuments/3010/AOD_investment_in_rural_regional_Australia.pdf.aspx?embed=y

NADA request that this Inquiry consider the recommendations from this submission to support regional, rural and remote respond to alcohol and other drug harms.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss the health outcomes and access to alcohol and other drugs treatment services delivered by non government organisations in regional, rural and remote NSW.

Kind regards,

Robert Stirling
Chief Executive Officer
Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies