

Conclusion of AADANT Youth AOD Project Work

Recognition of achievements and future opportunities

Introduction

In October 2019, the Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT) received funding for a project to identify and address areas of need in the area of alcohol and other drug (AOD) services targeted at young people. Young people are identified as a priority population in the National Drug Strategy (2017-2026) and, in the Northern Territory, face a range of compounding challenges relating to socioeconomic status, geographical remoteness and access to appropriate services.

AADANT was extremely fortunate to engage the services of Britt Guy, who brought with her a high level of skill and experience in both working with young people and managing complex projects. Over the preceding two and half years, Britt has forged strong, enduring networks and relationships across the AOD and youth sectors, driven targeted workforce development opportunities to the sector and produced a wide range of resources to provide guidance to services in best practice for working with young people who use AOD.

Timeline

This work was originally funded by the Mental Health and AOD Branch (NT Health) as a discreet, twelve-month project, to support the enhancement of service delivery to young people and connect AOD and allied services. Due to the interruptions to travel and engagement capabilities resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic, the original project extended to June 2021.

Following the success of the initial work, AADANT secured funding from the Northern Territory PHN to continue, and expand on the project, through to 30 June 2022.

Project Accomplishments

Youth AOD Sector Networking

- Network meetings
- Stakeholder relationships
 - NGO/ACCHO/Govt/Ministers/Private
 - Engagement with other youth networks

Support for AOD Sector Organisations

- Engagement for identification of needs in working with young people
- Covid response

- Increasing agency skills and capacity to work with young people

Resource Development

- Youth AOD Handbook and Directory
- Online resources
- Videos/AV

Workforce Development and Training

- Youth symposiums/forums
- Training opportunities - Sacha King
- Collaborative Top End Youth Sector Training Day

Advocacy

- Representation to politicians, government departments
- Promotion of the need for an embedded youth peak body

Where to from here?

On 30 June 2022, AADANT's dedicated Youth AOD Project work will conclude. While much has been achieved across the life of the project, AADANT recognises there is still significant work to be done to further develop the capability and capacity of both the AOD sector to better work with young people, and the youth sector to better support young people who use drugs and alcohol and the network of organisations, services and community that support them.

AADANT will continue to:

- provide networking opportunities for staff working within the Youth AOD sector through coordination of quarterly Youth AOD-specific online meetings in addition to AADANT's regional AOD network meetings.
- maintain strong ties with the broader youth sector through representation at Youth Sector networking events, offering engagement, feedback and advice on best practice for working with young people who use AOD.
- Identify and respond to the needs of young people who use drugs and alcohol and the services that work with them.
- develop new and updated resources to support organisations and staff working with young people who use drugs and alcohol.
- advocate for increased resourcing for organisations to enhance their work with young people who use drugs and alcohol.
- advocate for the establishment of a Youth Peak Body to represent the broad, multi-dimensional needs of young Territorians and provide research and advocacy for best practice.

Acknowledgement and thanks

Firstly, AADANT would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this project was undertaken. We would like to recognise the Elders past, present and – in particular - those emerging with whom this work couldn't have been completed.

AADANT would also like to thank our funders, the Mental Health and AOD Branch of NT Health, and the NT PHN for funding the delivery of this project.

We wish to thank all of the organisations, staff and participants who have generously provided their support, knowledge and time to see the outcomes of the project achieved. A particular thank you to Thamarrurr Youth Indigenous Corporation and Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council who worked with us to produce two short films exploring how best to work with remote communities to deliver AOD services and education to young people and their support systems.

AADANT would like to recognise the contributions of several contractors who have been integral in achieving the aims of the project including Sudha Coutinho, Sacha King, Global Headquarters and Huni Bolliger.

Finally, as Executive Officer and on behalf of AADANT, I want to give my unconditional appreciation and thanks to Britt Guy who has been unwavering in her dedication and effort to deliver the best possible outcomes for this project. Britt has shown herself to be a passionate, highly skilled and knowledgeable, and tireless advocate for the young people on whom the project focused. I look forward to seeing what else she achieves with young people in the NT and look forward to working alongside her in the future.