

‘A kind of absent presence’ Drug User Representation in Drug Policy Settings

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Abstract: For this year's James Rankin Oration, Dr Annie Madden will reflect on her decades of experience representing people who use drugs both within Australia and globally. Specifically, she will draw on her time as the CEO of the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug User League (AIVL) a role she held for 16 years, as well as her PhD research into drug user representation in high-level drug policy settings. Annie will speak to what it is like to represent such a highly marginalised and under-represented community, highlight some of the contradictions and tensions for drug user advocates when doing this type of representational work and will conclude with some thoughts on the role of allies and other key stakeholders in supporting and elevating the voice of people who use drugs in the drug policy context. At a time when APSAD as an organisation is looking to increase the involvement of people with lived/living experience of drug use and create a more welcoming and accepting space for this to occur, Annie's presentation will also seek to provide some food for thought along this journey including challenging the APSAD membership on what 'meaningful engagement' looks like *in practice*.