

## **Facilitating a lived & living experience policy review of opioid dependence treatment in Victoria**

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**Background:** Victoria's opioid dependence treatment (ODT) system has undergone significant shocks in recent years; with over a third of the estimated treatment population unable to access care, a rapidly declining workforce dependent on small number of high-volume prescribers, and a complex, fragmented state-wide service system. Harm Reduction Victoria's PAMS program has been an integral part of this complex system for over two decades, connecting consumers with treatment wherever possible, while providing peer support, advocacy and system navigation.

**Description of Intervention:** Following the Royal Commission into Mental Health and Harm Reduction International conference, HRVic was funded for two years of policy and advocacy work; with a focus on leading what may be a world-first "lived & living experience" review of the ODT system. This involved co-Chairing an Advisory Committee with the Department of Health and coordinating numerous stakeholders to build consensus recommendations to Government.

**Effectiveness:** Two reports to Government were produced outlining investment strategy and policy reform recommendations to sustain and increase access, and expand consumer choice throughout Victoria – representing consensus opinion from stakeholders across the treatment system.

**Implications:** This project constituted a unique partnership between Government, sector experts and affected communities; involving significant coordination across all aspects of Victoria's ODT system and uniquely driven by lived & living experience perspectives. Despite shifts throughout the two years in a volatile resourcing and political environment, this project represents a unique process led by affected communities and a new approach to evidence-informed policymaking, with numerous learnings for drug policy development and immediate impacts for First nations communities, people accessing pharmacotherapy and the workforce in Victoria.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** *No disclosures of interest*