

The DUO Leadership in Developing the AOD Peer Workforce

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**This abstract builds on the one we did last year, a major success with one of the strongest audience engagements of the conference.

Aim: Throughout the years and within a criminalised framework, peer workers with lived-experience of illicit drug use and their leadership faced significant social stigma, discrimination, and criminalisation. It deeply impacted DUOs, by and for people who use and have used drugs, as the organisations often faced themselves a high level of systemic stigma and discrimination when it came to their programs, their objectives, their workforce and even their resourcing. It hindered the development, implementation and expansion of lifesaving harm reduction work and services. Against all these odds and because of their dedication and peer-driven mission, the DUOs still grew, became experts in peer workforce development, tackled huge challenges, and nurtured strong partnerships within several sectors. This session aims to showcase the DUO leadership in developing the AOD peer workforce and working with partner organisations to achieve strategic goals and crucial success in community care by and for people who use and have used drugs.

Panellist 1: Natasha Nikolic

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Detailed Description of Topics to be Discussed:

The discussion will be around what are the next steps in AOD peer workforce development led by the DUOs:

- The DUO representative/panellists are state experts in their respective peer workforce and communities. They will share about their leadership experience in advancing the development of their AOD peer workforce, including diversifying the workforce with people with other community intersections (like Aboriginal people who use drugs, LGBTQ+ people who use drugs, CALD people who use drugs, sex workers who use drugs, and parents who

use drugs to only name a few), the peer-led programs they are strengthening to better reach people who are deeply stigmatised, the challenges and the opportunities of supporting other non-peer organisations, government agencies, AOD treatment settings, and diverse other health and wellbeing programs.

-The importance of investing in AOD peer workforce development is now clear in Australia being best practice, cost-effective and most effective in reaching vulnerable community members. The AIVL peer-led network of DUO has over 35 years of expertise in training people with lived-experience to become incredible peer workers and leaders. It is crucial now more than ever that the DUOs are well recognised for their work, their experience, expertise and leadership by partners and non-peer organisations, especially when employing peer workers within other settings to ensure their safety and support. What are the barriers to overcome?

Discussion Section:

Panellists will share their AOD peer workforce development peer leader expertise and will update us on their most recent workforce development programs, partnerships, strategies, successes and challenges. We will have a panel discussion on how the DUO leadership creates an opportunity for evidence-based, sustainable, supportive and successful AOD peer workforce development.

The use of the conference app, prompt and disruptive questions will ensure deep engagement by the audience who will then be invited to ask questions to the panellists, partner organisations, AOD and health workers from across Australia will be invited to share their thoughts and ask questions to our peer leader panellists.