

AOD peaks and truth-telling: VAADA's submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission

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Introduction: The Yoorrook Justice Commission is a formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria. It is the first of its kind in Australia. VAADA's submission to Yoorrook's Health Issues Paper is the first submission made by an Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) peak body to a truth telling commission.

Method / Approach OR: *Drawing on research literature, our members, and First Peoples working in Victoria's AOD service system, VAADA's submission examines the role of AOD and the AOD service system in historical and current experiences of injustice by First Peoples in Victoria.*

Key Findings: From the early days of colonisation, AOD played a significant role in contributing to the racism and injustice faced by First Peoples in Victoria. This legacy endures today. First peoples face heightened AOD risks and harms, and AOD is an important contributor to the gaps in health and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. While Victoria's AOD service system has made important progress in recent years, culturally inappropriate services, disconnection from kin and country, and structural bias and discrimination persist.

Discussions and Conclusions: AOD inhabits a complex and contested place in Australia's settler-colonial history, including as a mechanism of exploitation, exclusion and disempowerment of Australia's First Peoples. Significant work is required in the AOD service system to improve outcomes for First Peoples. Doing so is crucial for First peoples to achieve Voice, Truth and Treaty.

Implications for Practice or Policy (optional): The participation of AOD peaks in truth-telling is an important part of the reconciliation process. AOD peaks are uniquely positioned to support the clinical and cultural shifts needed to improve access and support for First Peoples accessing AOD services.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None to declare.