

## Media Release

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### Federal cuts to South Australian Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Services

The South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services (SANDAS) represents the non-government organisations who deliver alcohol and other drug treatment in South Australia.

In this capacity, we wish to highlight our significant concern at the outcomes of recent federal government funding decisions made by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet under the Aboriginal Advancement Strategy. These decisions relate to the funding of treatment services run by Aboriginal organisations for Aboriginal people affected by alcohol and other drug use issues.

These services have been waiting to hear the outcomes of decisions about their funding since January. Their current funding runs out on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018. It is only in the last week that many of these organisations have learned about their ongoing funding. It is now apparent that a number have lost core and/or project funding or that funding has been granted for shorter periods than expected. This is with just one month's notice to the end of current contracts.

This impacts significantly upon these organisations who are required to renew staff contracts, pay redundancies where staff need to be let go, lease premises and vehicles and meet payroll, tax and redundancy obligations like any other business. Most importantly however, they have a responsibility to their clients, their families and communities to clear direction about how they can access treatment and address their issues.

This been thrown into disarray by the late announcement of funding and in a number of cases by reducing the amount of funding or the length of time that projects will be funded for.

SANDAS calls on the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to make public its reasons for reducing or defunding services. We also call on the Department to indicate how those clients who have been supported by defunded or reduced services will be supported into the future. The reduction in funding to Aboriginal services is likely to have a significant impact on mainstream treatment services in the State, as well as increasing demand in mental health and homelessness sectors.

It is a disappointing outcome to come to light during National Reconciliation Week, a time when the government should be evaluating its Closing the Gap and Aboriginal engagement strategies, and ensuring that individuals, families and communities are appropriately supported to address issues with alcohol and other drugs with effective, localised and adequately resourced strategies.

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SANDAS is the Peak Body supporting NGOs delivering services in the Alcohol and Other Drugs field in South Australia