

# Media Release

*For immediate release*

## Responsible Reporting of Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

The South Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drugs (SANDAS) representing non-government alcohol and drug treatment services in South Australia calls on the South Australian media to adopt appropriate language when reporting on alcohol and other drug issues.

The media plays an important role in the public debate regarding Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD). Alcohol and other drug dependence is recognised as a significant, chronic and relapsing health condition by the World Health Organisation. People suffering from this condition should be treated with the same respect as any other person addressing a significant illness in their life.

We urge journalists to:

- Consider the way in which they report alcohol and other drug issues. The language used in the media can have a significant negative and stigmatising effect on people who use drugs. Stigma has been shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of people seeking treatment. For a comprehensive guideline on the use of language see [https://www.nada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/language\\_matters\\_-\\_online\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.nada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/language_matters_-_online_-_final.pdf).
- When drawing on a media release from an organisation with a vested interest in promoting a particular view (e.g., a drug testing laboratory commenting on drug use at work, a government department funded to undertake monitoring of certain drugs but not others, a service provider charging significant fees for treatment), explicitly identify where a commentator or interviewee may have a conflict of interest and how that conflict may colour their position.
- Interview a range of people about alcohol and drug use issues, including those with expertise in treatment, balancing articles to reflect the multiple viewpoints around substance use and treatment. This includes interviewing clinicians and researchers that have undertaken work in this area who can provide an evidence-based view.
- Be aware of the risks to people who have a current or past issue with alcohol or other drugs. They can be vulnerable and exposure in the media can have significant impacts on their recovery, future employment, and relationships with family and friends. See the AOD Media Watch guidelines for people with alcohol and drug issues considering giving an interview to the media - <http://www.aodmediawatch.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/aod-guidelines-consumers.pdf>.



[www.sandas.org.au](http://www.sandas.org.au)

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

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Finally, we recommend that every article should contain information on where to get support. We recommend that the following text is included in all articles, and/or attached to website or online pages related to on air commentary:

If you or someone you know and care about needs help with alcohol or other drug issues, you can find help from:

- [www.knowyouroptions.sa.gov.au](http://www.knowyouroptions.sa.gov.au) contains information about available treatment options and a comprehensive service directory.
- The Alcohol and Drug Information Service **1300 13 1340** (South Australian callers only - local call fee).
- The Family Drug Support Helpline 1300368186 – a 24/7 support line for people affected by a family member's substance use

Thank you for your consideration of these guidelines. For further information please ring or email:

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