Media release

For Immediate release

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Advertiser Special Investigation again falls short of the media's own guidelines

The Australian government working with the major media groups around Australia developed a set of guidelines called the *Mindframe for Alcohol and Other Drugs* is a strategy to support the media and other stakeholders to communicate safely, respectfully and responsibly about alcohol and other drugs *(https://mindframe.org.au/alcohol-other-drug*s).

In recent weeks the Advertiser has run several articles which fail to meet these guidelines. Today' 'A-B-Ecstasy' is a classic example of journalistic failure to deal responsibility with the issues of alcohol and drug use in our community. It is problematic for several reasons:

- It provides information to children on how to access drugs (find one of a limited number of apps and order drugs and have them delivered to school).
- It provides advice on how to get around intended controls by establishing a VPN, effectively bypassing age and security controls put in place by government or parents.
- The story describes the processes without identifying the risks the young people face in doing this, including that they may not be getting what they think they are getting (drug substitution is common in the illicit market), may get picked up in a police sting, may get suspended or expelled if caught, or may have a serious medical event because of using an illicit drug.
- It does not provide any information on where young people can seek help if they are experimenting with drugs, nor where parents can seek help to support their children.
- The article is based on report by one teacher, doesn't canvas the voices of children, or seek input from parents or professionals who work in and undertake research in the alcohol and drug sector.
- It lacks any indication of the number of children who might be experimenting with or using drugs, signs for parents to look out for and strategies to help parents and teachers to address these problems, such as referral to the Alcohol and Drug Information line (1300131340) the theknowyouroptions.sa.gov.au website or Family Drug Support (www.fds.org.au).

SANDAS does appreciate the call to better control the technology companies that exploit Australians for profit. They make profit not only from promoting the sale of illicit drugs but also from alcohol to vulnerable people both underaged and struggling with dependence or experiencing harms. They also use their platforms to advertise gambling, often in its most harmful forms again exploiting vulnerable people for profit with no regards to the consequences for individuals, families and the community. These harms place a significant social and financial burden on our state through health, justice and social costs.

We also call for a significant expansion of early intervention, prevention, treatment, support funding to the alcohol and drug sector. Currently only one in four or five people who need treatment in Australia can access it. This gap is significantly higher in rural and remote locations and within certain subgroups in the community, young people being one such group.

SANDAS South Australian Network of Drug & Alcohol Services

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

A: 204 Wright Street, Adelaide SA 5000
T: (08) 8231 8818
E: sandasinfo@sandas.org.au
ABN: 88 963 018 438

ECAAS ISO 9001 CERTIFIED QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In SA there are very few programs that support young people to understand the risks and harms associated with drug and alcohol use operating in the education system, limited treatment options and limited supports for parents. We have very good evidence from those small number of services working in this space that they can make a significant difference for children and families. We call on both federal and state governments to adequately fund these urgently needed interventions.

For further information contact:

Michael White
Executive Officer
Ph: 0416176611
E: michael@sandas.org.au