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Media Release

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Shameful stigmatising of people requiring treatment

Recent reports in the media about the establishment of a residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre in Glenelg have fallen back on the shameful stigmatising of people who want and need treatment for their alcohol and drug use. The proposed Glenelg site will be run with 24/7 support for people voluntarily entering treatment. Prior to being placed in the centre they will have undertaken a period of withdrawal and detoxification under the support of health professionals.

Alcohol and drug dependence is defined by the World Health Organisation and recognised by every health department in Australia as a chronic relapsing health condition. As members of our community, people needing treatment have a human right to receive it. Governments have a responsibility to provide it. Both individuals and communities benefit from alcohol and drug dependent people receiving treatment in many ways. These include:

- It supports the individual to make changes, enabling them to re-engage with their families, secure employment, undertake training, and contribute to their community.
- It helps families re-unite, connects parents and children, and heals hurts.
- For communities it re-engages people in work and volunteering, education and employment.
- It reduces the burden on the health system, freeing up emergency departments, ambulances and general practice.
- It reduces demand on the justice system, reducing crime, enabling police to focus on more serious issues, and reduces demand for illicit drugs.

Good evidence shows that drug and alcohol treatments provide over $5 in savings to the community for every dollar invested[1].

It is time to stop the rabid stigmatising of people who require treatment for alcohol and drug dependence. They are our family members, our friends, children, siblings and parents. Drug and alcohol dependence can affect anyone from any walk of life. And anyone needing treatment should be able to access it. People affected by dependence should be treated with the same care and compassion as any other person requiring treatment for a health condition.

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[1] https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi657

The South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services (SANDAS) works to enhance community wellbeing and reduce the harm associated with alcohol and drug use. We represent non-government organisations working in the alcohol and other drugs sector and provide independent advocacy and representation, workforce development, networking and policy support for our members.