



Productivity Commission

Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector

Submission

**Western Australian Network for Alcohol and other Drugs
WANADA**

Introduction

The Western Australian Network for Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the alcohol and other drug sector in Western Australia, offering advocacy and support to up to 90 member agencies, including metropolitan, regional, remote and indigenous organisations.

WANADA strongly advocates for not for profit (NFP) Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) agencies to receive appropriate levels of recognition, support and funding to deliver services to their consumers. WANADA believes that the not for profit AOD sector in Western Australia is the most suited to deliver a broad range of services to diverse consumer group. In order to achieve this, the sector needs appropriate levels of support and funding from both Federal and State levels of government, to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner, therefore maximising the positive outcomes for their consumers.

Whilst WANADA recognises the NFP AOD sector in Western Australia faces many of the same issues other sectors face, including remuneration and retention challenges, the tyranny of bureaucratic reporting requirements, short-term funding and inadequate funding to cover administration cost; they will not be covered in this submission as they have been addressed organisations such as WACOSS and ADCA. This submission will outline issues **specific** to the NFP AOD sector in Western Australia, highlighting themes against the four broad categories suggested by the Productivity Commission.

Measuring the contribution of the not for profit sector

- **The Alcohol and other Drug sector does not fit within the classifications provided by the ICNPO:**

The International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations (ICNPO) currently does not provide a classification that accurately reflects the not for profit AOD sector and its activities and therefore potentially compromises measurement of the sectors contribution using the framework outlined in the Productivity Commission's discussion paper.

- **Recognition of the diverse and complex needs of AOD service consumers:**

There needs to be recognition from government that AOD service consumers have complex and diverse needs. Meeting quantitative reporting requirements is not always achievable and is not truly reflective of the positive qualitative outcomes consumers can achieve when engaging with an AOD service. Whilst WANADA acknowledges that 'evidence based practice' is essential in determining best treatment options for consumers and essential for policy development, it needs to be recognised by government that all levels of engagement by a AOD services of a consumer with an AOD problem is a positive outcome. Indigenous services are a classic example of this. By imposing a time-consuming quantitative reporting system on an Indigenous focused program that delivers non-evidence based service, such as hunting trips and men's groups, the true benefits for consumers cannot be measured. There needs to be an acceptance from government that qualitative outcomes are as important, if not more so, than quantitative outcomes.

WANADA recommends that government needs to support agencies that are thinking 'outside the square' and who embrace traditional holistic approaches to working with people with AOD problems.

Ways of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector

- **'One size does not fit all':**

Traditionally there has been a 'one size fits all' approach to funding NFP organisations. This has limited and often detrimental effects on efficiency and effectiveness of the NFP AOD sector. Government needs to recognise the diversity of needs of the AOD sector in Western Australia, specifically the geographical locations, diverse needs of the consumers, the different types of service models, the size of organisations and the discrepancy of skill sets managers/AOD workers have between these organisations. The needs of a Sobering up Shelter in the Kimberley differ greatly to those of a large non-residential service in the Perth metro area and imposing the same reporting requirements on all agencies across the sector impacts negatively on the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector.

WANADA recommends that funding for AOD agencies and subsequent reporting requirements should fit the needs of the agency, not the agency fitting the needs of government funding and reporting requirements. Appropriate levels of funding for core and capital costs need to be provided to support agencies to deliver the best possible service to clients. This funding needs to recognise the tyranny of distance for rural and remote services and cost high cost of maintenance of buildings for residential services.

The sector's provision of government-funded services

- **Acknowledging the value of local and community knowledge in service delivery and design:**

Stronger acknowledgement of the value of local and community knowledge in the design and delivery of services would limit the detrimental impact of one-size-fits-all approaches to the provision of government funded services within the NFP AOD sector in WA. Specifically in the rural and remote locations, NFP services are in the best position to design, deliver and adapt services according to client and community needs. It is essential that government recognise the importance of local knowledge and the appropriateness of service delivery in a local context. An agency delivering a service in the Kimberley has an excellent appreciation of the needs of the community it is delivering to. However, quite often, agencies are dictated to from government departments who have constructed their view of remote Australia from the media.

WANADA recommends that government needs to consult with rural and remote NFP AOD agencies when designing funding opportunities and developing funding outcomes and reporting requirements. WANADA recommends that funding requirements should remain 'open', to allow AOD agencies to adapt and change to the changing needs of the communities they are operating in.

Trends and developments impacting on the sector

- **Allowing AOD services flexibility to adapt to trends and changes in drug taking in the community:**

Provision of services in the NFP AOD sector is by its nature needs to respond to seasonal, geographical and community demands on alcohol and other drug taking trends within society, as such much greater consideration and flexibility needs to be afforded for innovation, advocacy and community driven responses in meeting demand. This needs to be reflected more appropriately in both policy and contractual considerations.

Currently, funding requirements do not provide agencies with the ability to adapt to the changing needs of their consumers. WANADA recommends that government funding and reporting requirements become less onerous and embrace services ability to change to the need of their services.

Conclusion

Being the peak organisation for the AOD sector in Western Australia, WANADA hopes the findings and recommendations that come from the Productivity Commission's study on the contribution of the not-for-profit sector, will be turned into practice; that the Government 'walks its talk'.

The not-for-profit sector, and more specifically the AOD sector, is diverse, offering many different services to some of Australia's most marginalised people. The Productivity Commission's study is the first of many steps in recognising and embracing this diversity, which is essential in improving on the critical and exceptional work that is already being achieved. WANADA strongly encourages the Government to continue with its sentiment of recognising and supporting the contribution of the not-for-profit sector.