

# Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service

Update No. 1, September 2004

## Introduction

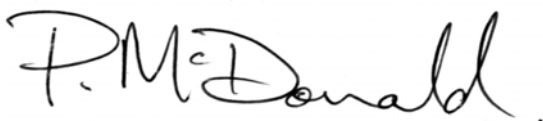
Welcome to the first update newsletter for the Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service. Given interest in the development of this exciting new service, we decided to develop a newsletter to keep you updated with its progress. In this first edition we cover the background and progress so far. Future editions will be sent out over the coming months during the development of the service.

I am very keen for everyone to have an opportunity to put forward their ideas about the development of the Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service.

To make sure this happens consultations with the Koori community will continue, the Steering Group that supports the project has been put in place and this newsletter will continue to provide information. A state-wide community forum is also planned for September 16th.

If you would like to participate further, you can contact members of the Steering Group or contact us directly here, on (03) 9637 4838 and ask for Raelene Lesniowska.

I hope you find the information in this first newsletter informative and useful.



Paul McDonald  
Director Drugs Policy and Services

## Background

In September 2001 the Victorian Government announced that \$1million would be allocated over two years for the development of a Koori Alcohol and Drug Strategy.

To develop the strategy, the Koori Drug Strategy Advisory Committee (KDSAC) was established. The committee is made up of representatives from the Koori community, peak and local Indigenous organisations and relevant government departments.

In 2002, the KDSAC approved a range of projects for development as the first phase of the Koori Alcohol and Drug Strategy: The Koori Alcohol and Drug Plan 2003-2004.

One of these initiatives includes the development of a Koori Youth Residential Rehabilitation Service, based on a spiritual healing model. In November 2002, the Victorian Government made an election commitment to building a Koori specific alcohol and drug facility, which, based on the priorities identified by the KDSAC, was agreed to be youth specific.

## Funding for the Service

The Victorian Government subsequently committed \$1.5m in capital funding for this service. The Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Fund has committed a further \$1m grant for capital

development. An application has also been made to the Indigenous Land Council for the purchase of land for the service.

Ongoing funds to operate the service will come from the recurrent funding allocation announced in 2003/04 for the Koori Drug Strategy. This funding was part of the Victorian Government Drug Initiative.

## Why this type of service?

Throughout the development of the Koori Drug Strategy, the Koori community identified alcohol and drug misuse as a major contributor to poor health and spiritual well being within the Indigenous community, particularly youth.

Current substance misuse trends among Koori communities validate such concerns, as follows:

- While Indigenous people make up approximately 0.5% of the Victorian population (Indigenous census population, ABS), in 2001, 7.5% (1,935) of clients accessing drug and alcohol treatment services funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) identified as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.
- 14% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients accessing DHS funded drug and alcohol services were youth (12-21 years), with their primary drug of concern being cannabis, followed by alcohol.
- At least 50% of clients accessing treatment in Victoria for volatile substance use were aged 12-15 years, with a further 19% aged 16-21 years.

Three recent final reports of Victorian parliamentary inquiries (conducted by the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee)

have also noted a need for Koori specific holistic healing centres.

## Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service Steering Group

In May 2004, The Victorian Government Department of Human Services (DHS) formed the Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service Steering Group to develop this service.

This Steering Group consists of Koori community representatives, peak and local Koori organisations and relevant government departments. So far, this group has met three times and will continue to meet throughout development and implementation of the service. Organisations and Government Departments represented at the meetings to date include:

- Maya Living Free Healing Centre
- Ngwala Willumbong Cooperative
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
- Aboriginal Hostels
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Tumbukka Regional Council
- Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- Youth Substance Abuse Service
- Department of Human Services

A Capital Working Group has also been formed from key representatives of the Steering Group. The Capital Working Group will guide the capital processes of the service such as building of the actual Healing Service. Both the Steering Group and Capital Working Group are chaired by Paul McDonald, Director Drugs Policy and Services.

## Talking with the community

While there are many examples of residential rehabilitation services operating in Victoria, there is no service operating in Australia that is similar to the proposed Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service.

The Koori community is being consulted to decide how this specific Koori youth service should operate and how it will work with health, education and support services.

In March 2004, SED Consulting was contracted to conduct this consultation. Jodie Ryan, Director of the Indigenous division of SED Consulting: Ingenuity, is the lead consultant for this project. Jodie's report will be finished in September but community consultations for this stage of the project will continue through to October.

## What will the service do?

The Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service will work with Koori youth with alcohol and/or drug problems using a spiritual healing model.

The purpose of the service is to help Koori youth recover from substance abuse and re-connect with their communities.

The service will be a statewide, residential rehabilitation service, ideally centrally located with access to health, education and other support services.

The detail of what the service will do is still being informed by community consultations. However at this point it is proposed that the service model will consist of a statewide assessment/intake phase, a residential phase involving educational, health, vocational and healing oriented programs, and an aftercare/exit phase where the young

person is reconnected to positive community activities, mentors, support services and ongoing activities.

## Further communication with the community

- Consultancy report (due September) including recommendations on what the service will do based on a completed literature review and extensive Indigenous led consultations;
- A statewide community forum to be held in September 2004 to present the outcomes of the project consultancy and seek further community input;
- Newsletter updates (to coincide with key project milestones); and
- Further consultations as required.

## What happens next?

- Complete the service plan
- Tender for the service provider
- Develop an interim service
- Develop the permanent service, including:
  - Locating and buying the land; and
  - Designing and constructing the building.

## Next Update

The next newsletter update about this service will be produced in October and will include information about:

- The consultancy outcomes;
- The service plan; and
- The tendering process.

In the meantime, invitations will be distributed for the State-wide forum to be held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2004.

For further information about this project, contact Raelene Lesniowska of DHS on: (03) 9637 4838.



