ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS NEWSLETTER

phn CENTRAL AND EASTERN SYDNEY
An Australian Government Initiative

AOD eNews November 2026

1. Central and Eastern Sydney PHN	6. The Station
2. NADA	7. Family Drug Support
3. The Matilda Centre	8. Rainbow Recovery Club
4. CRC Specialist Training	9. Community Restorative Centre
5. SESLHD	10. Sector news, additional resources, and other upcoming events, training and webinars

1. Central and Eastern Sydney PHN

Update from CESPHN

Paul Hardy, CESPHN AOD Manager

As Mental Health Month comes to a close, the theme "A little connection goes a long way" is particularly relevant to the AOD sector. Many people accessing AOD support are also experiencing mental health challenges, and meaningful connection can be a powerful protective factor and an important part of recovery.

Across our region, services are working hard to strengthen the links between AOD and mental health support. Through collaboration, integrated care, shared learning, and strong referral pathways, providers are helping people access more coordinated and person-centred care. These partnerships recognise that mental health and AOD concerns are often interconnected and that better outcomes are achieved when support reflects the whole person and their unique circumstances.

Connection also happens in everyday interactions: a conversation with a clinician, support from a peer worker, engagement with community programs, or simply feeling heard and understood. These moments can build trust, reduce isolation, and create pathways to hope and recovery.

As we reflect on Mental Health Month, we thank the dedicated workforce, people with lived and living experience, and community partners who contribute to this important work every day. Together, we are creating a more connected system where a little connection truly can go a long way.

2. NADA

NADA Conference 2027

Michele Campbell, Clinical Director (NADA)

The 2027 NADA conference theme is Just Futures: Courage. Care. Collective Action. Abstracts are now open and NADA invites submissions for lightening rounds, oral presentations, workshops, symposium and poster presentations. This is an opportunity to showcase innovative practices or research. Abstracts must be submitted to NADA online by 5pm Wednesday 11 November 2026. We encourage workers and services across the alcohol and other drugs sector and other sectors such as justice, mental health, domestic and family violence. NADA will prioritise abstracts that are innovative and aligned to the conference theme and stream. Interactive and practice-related sessions are encouraged to maximise engagement with conference participants.

3. The Matilda Centre

The National Comorbidity Guidelines have released the National Practice Framework, an implementation toolkit, and an online community of practice.

Prof. Katherine L Mills, Tanaya Narbey-Rolph, Assoc. Prof. Christina Marel (The Matilda Centre)

The Matilda Centre is very pleased to share some new resources that have been developed as part of the Comorbidity Project with funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Developed in close collaboration with the alcohol and other drugs sector, these resources aim to support practitioners achieve better outcomes for clients experiencing mental health and substance use challenges.

The National Practice Framework for the management of mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment settings outlines principles for the delivery of inclusive, equitable, and accessible care that recognises co-occurring mental health (MH) conditions as core business, is holistic and person-centred, integrated and collaborative, with a focus on connection and engagement. It promotes high-quality evidence-based care that is trauma-informed, upholds dignity and respect, and is delivered by a skilled and proficient workforce.

The principles have been developed for organisations and practitioners within the government, nongovernment or private sectors that provide specialised services for the treatment of AOD-related issues.

The Guidelines implementation toolkit is designed to support organisations implement evidence-based recommendations for managing co-occurring AOD and MH conditions into practice.

The toolkit aims to assist organisational leaders to identify and address the following:

- evidence-to-practice gaps in relation to Guidelines recommendations;
- barriers to the implementation of Guidelines recommendations;
- implementation strategies and tools to address identified barriers; and
- processes for implementing and evaluating change.

The toolkit has been developed for people working within AOD treatment settings who have the capacity to influence change, such as organisational leaders, service managers, clinic directors, quality assurance and improvement officers.

The national online Community of Practice (CoP) was developed in response to the well-recognised need to better support frontline workers delivering care for people experiencing co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions. Despite growing awareness, many workers remain isolated, with limited access to ongoing training, peer support, and practical tools to implement evidence-based care.

The aims of the CoP are to provide a platform where members can make connections, access valuable resources and engage and collaborate with other professionals to enhance their practice. Since going live in April last year, almost 2,350 have joined the CoP.

Learn more about the Project and their other online and face to face training options here.

4. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)

CRC Specialist Training – Working with People Impacted by the Prison System

Claire McMahon, Training Coordinator, CRC

Community Restorative Centre (CRC) is a leading NSW non-government organisation working alongside people impacted by the criminal legal and prison systems. CRC specialises in providing reintegration and post-release support for people with multiple and intersecting needs.

CRC's specialist training offers agencies an opportunity to build capability and deepen their understanding of the prison system and the experiences of criminalised and formerly incarcerated people.

The training aims to strengthen understanding of:

· The prison system and its impacts

· Challenges and barriers people experience after release

· Practical approaches and best practice reintegration models

Sessions are led by experienced practitioners and grounded in the knowledge and lived experience of people CRC works alongside.

Training can be tailored to suit your organisation and delivered online or in person. We'd be happy to discuss available options and fees—please email us at info@crcnsw.org.au

5. SESLHD

Building Momentum in BBV Prevention and Treatment in SESLHD Drug & Alcohol Services

Paul Robinson, Viral Hepatitis Clinical Nurse Consultant, SESLHD Drug & Alcohol Services

SESLHD Drug & Alcohol Services continue to strengthen its response to blood borne viruses (BBVs), achieving significant gains in testing, prevention and treatment during July to September 2026. These outcomes highlight the value of taking testing and treatment to where people are, reducing barriers to care through outreach, flexible testing options, and strong partnerships with NGOs and healthcare providers. They also reflect the commitment of clinicians across the service to embedding BBV care into routine AOD care, ensuring clients can access timely testing and treatment. Notably, 100% of clients diagnosed with hepatitis C initiated treatment between 1 July and 30 September. This outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of streamlined testing pathways and efficient care coordination.

The service's innovative work was recognised nationally, with presentations delivered at the Drug and Alcohol Nurses Australasia (DANA) Conference on integrating BBV and sexual healthcare into AOD settings, showcasing practical approaches to embedding testing, prevention and treatment into routine clinical care. At the Australasian Viral Hepatitis Conference, presentations were delivered on the EMPOWER sub-study, a peer-implemented hepatitis C testing model delivered in partnership with The Kirby Institute and Hepatitis NSW as part of the National Hepatitis C Point-of-Care Testing Program. The project contributed to a 125% increase in hepatitis C testing in SESLHD Drug & Alcohol Services over a 12-month period and highlighted the benefits of flexible, client-centred testing models. A second presentation showcased the range of hepatitis C testing modalities available and how they can be utilised across a variety of settings.

Another significant achievement was the successful transition of Dried Blood Spot (DBS) testing from a pilot study to standard clinical practice. Embedding DBS testing into routine care has reduced result turnaround times from approximately two weeks to just 3-5 days, enabling earlier treatment initiation while reducing administrative burden and freeing up valuable clinician time. This has improved both service efficiency and client access to timely care.

Strong progress was also achieved in hepatitis B prevention. Following a service-wide audit, opportunities were identified to strengthen hepatitis B screening and vaccination pathways. Targeted quality improvement initiatives resulted in a 325% increase in hepatitis B vaccination uptake, demonstrating the benefits of proactive client review and embedding prevention activities within routine AOD care.

Looking ahead, the service will continue to expand BBV and sexual health testing, strengthen hepatitis B vaccination efforts, build workforce capability and sustain innovative testing models to improve access, engagement and health outcomes for clients.

GLAD and GPs Make a Difference

Anna McVinish, GLAD Clinical Nurse Consultant, Drug and Alcohol Services, SESLHD

When first referred by his GP, Jason's* needs initially far exceeded the scope of clinical and supportive management that general practice can routinely accommodate.

In his mid-50s, Jason lived with multiple, significant health and social difficulties, was reticent to engage with tertiary referrals made by his GP, had frequently been 'lost-to-follow-up' after hospital admissions and had consistently declined specialist alcohol and drug input despite being prescribed Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) medications for 30+ years and reporting a severe alcohol dependence decades earlier.



Managing appointments, treatment recommendations and competing health priorities felt overwhelming for Jason, and previously alienating interactions with healthcare providers had reduced his confidence to seek care outside of his trusted GP relationship. As a consequence, his nutritional status, mobility, functional capacity, social connection and overall quality of life, were deteriorating rapidly.

Working alongside the GP and taking time to understand his reservations, the GP, Jason and the GLAD CNC developed a plan that supported the GP in balancing the complexity of multiple sedating medications, historical dependence, current treatment needs and concerns for balancing risk and quality of life, including advocacy regarding medication changes. And also included practical problem-solving; such as championing his healthcare rights and navigating new community referral pathways. The approach was paced to suit Jason's needs in an honest and collaborative partnership. His GP oversaw his progress but could focus on their specific role, knowing that treatment goals beyond the scope of general practice could be progressed by the GLAD clinician, and that this would benefit Jason’s overall health and wellbeing in the future.

For some people in this complex patient cohort, a trusting general practice relationship can support them to make positive and informed heath choices for the first time. As such, the value of strengthening general practice to deliver truly collaborative care with specialist AOD support cannot be overstated. Drawing on what the GLAD project offers can keep the patient at the centre and can help transform complex presentations into achievable pathways towards improved health, connection, and independence.

6. The Station

The Station Ltd. Drop-in Centre

Mathew Morrow, Acting Operations Manager, The Station

The Station Ltd is a small 'drop-in' service that is walking distance from Wynyard station. We operate 6 days a week from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday to Friday and Sat from 7:30 am to 2:00 pm. We are currently closed on Sundays.

We provide breakfast and lunch every day, as well as showers, laundry facilities, tea & coffee, post boxes, clothes & toiletries computers, Wi-Fi, Foxtel, and a relaxing atmosphere. We have a team of housing support workers who provide housing support, this includes but is not limited to; advocacy, housing applications, co-ordination with 'Homes' and guidance around the private rental market. As well AOD support for clients seeking support in this space.



We have recently had a WHS review across the service. This has led us to adopt a new duress alarm system, improving safety within the building. The 24-hour monitoring system allows us to access phone and video support within seconds. We have also completed a new emergency plan with an updated Emergency Evacuation procedure as well as a revised Emergency Evacuation guide to be displayed with in the service, for a smoother process in case of an emergency. We also have obtained new spill kits and first aid kits. Additionally, the whole team is completing De-Escalation & Resilience Training.

Vinnies Connect and Thread Together have both visited to find out about the services we offer at The Station. This has allowed us to demonstrate the different services we provide here and strengthen referral pathways. Thread Together is a referral base NGO that provides clothing to order for those in need and Vinnies Connect provides one on one support via mentors for clients who are looking for social support and to help with isolation.



We have assisted 13 people to be accepted on priority housing with HOMES NSW. Three people have moved into housing in the month of October alone. During this process The Station staff have supported the clients through this journey to allow the smoothest transition into housing. We have continued to work with our partners Relove and 2ndLife to help furnish their homes and provide the best opportunity to settle into their new properties.

We are looking forward to the origination continuing to grow and move forward, providing better service delivery for the clients who access the service.

7. Family Drug Support

Family Drug Support

Ness Fredericks, Family Support Worker, Family Drug Support

Family Drug Support (FDS) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides information and support to families and loved ones of people who use substances.

FDS operates a National 24/7 telephone support service for families affected by alcohol and other drug issues.

FDS offers open face-to-face and online support meetings, providing a safe space for family members affected by alcohol and other drugs (AOD).

A monthly face-to-face meeting is held on the first Wednesday of each month at Randwick Community Centre. Click here for details.

FDS also offers *Stepping Stones*, a structured, experiential four-day program for family and friends supporting someone who uses substances, delivered over two weekends.

The next NSW program will run on 7-8 and 14-15 November 2026, with the first program for 2027 scheduled for April. Click here for dates and to submit an expression of interest (EOI).

For more information about our services, visit our website.

If you are in need of immediate support, please call our 24/7 support line: **1300 368 186**

8. Rainbow Recovery Club

Rainbow Recovery Club

Patricia M, Rainbow Recovery Club

The Rainbow Recovery Club (RRC) began in 2002. It is an incorporated association dedicated to managing the Rainbow Recovery Room at 303 Riley St Surry Hills. We host a range of LGBTQIA+ 12 step (abstinence based) meetings including : Alcoholics Anonymous (AA); Narcotics Anonymous (NA); *Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA); Sex Love & Relationships Anonymous (SLAA)*. In addition to hosting the peer led 12 step meetings we aim at cultivating a vibrant LGBTQIA+ recovery community. Through lively Mardi Gras celebrations and annual retreats, we create supportive spaces where anyone can connect, heal, and thrive together without alcohol or other drugs.

A few words from some of our members:

"Rainbow Recovery Club has been my saving grace. I truly believed I only had two options as an alcoholic and addict: prison in one hand and death in the other. Then something shifted, I found my way into recovery. Through Rainbow, I have learned to stand in the truth of who I am as a proud

trans woman, with honesty, courage, and strength. I am grateful to be alive, present, and walking this journey with others in recovery"

"I walked into the RRC in 2018 feeling broken, lost and defeated. I was welcomed with kindness, love and no judgment. Rainbow Recovery Club showed me that real connection and friendship existed beyond the LGBTQ+ party scene. Today, I am 7 years sober, living with a peace I never thought possible."

"In April *2022, I reached out to The Rainbow Recovery Club feeling lost and unsure where to turn. From my very first meeting, I felt welcomed, safe, and accepted enough to be honest about my addictions. Since then, I have stayed sober, and I truly believe that without the support of the RRC, I wouldn't be here today."*

For more information and meeting times, please visit our website: www.rainbowrecoveryclub.org.au or email: patricia.m@rainbowrecoveryclub.org.au

9. Community Restorative Centre

CRC at the QNADA Conference: Connecting, Learning and Strengthening AOD Practice

Jermaine Sakr, Manager / Community Restorative Centre (CRC)

Recently, my colleague Bea and I had the opportunity to attend the QNADA Conference in Brisbane, representing Community Restorative Centre (CRC) and our Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) program.

The conference provided a valuable opportunity to step away from day-to-day service delivery and connect with others working across the AOD sector. It was particularly useful to hear different perspectives on contemporary AOD practice, reflect on emerging issues affecting clients and services, and share experiences with colleagues from across the sector.

For CRC, opportunities like this are important because our AOD work supports people who can experience multiple and intersecting barriers, including contact with the criminal justice system, reintegration into the community, housing instability and other complex support needs.

Attending the conference allowed us to reflect on our own practice and consider how ideas from across the broader AOD sector can continue to inform CRC's approach to delivering accessible, person-centred and responsive support.



Just as importantly, the conference created space for networking and relationship-building. Connecting with other AOD workers and organisations helps strengthen collaboration across the sector and provides opportunities to share knowledge, challenges and approaches to supporting people experiencing alcohol and other drug issues.

We returned to CRC with new ideas and perspectives to share with our colleagues and incorporate into ongoing conversations about service delivery and continuous improvement.

We appreciated the opportunity to attend and participate in an event that brought together people committed to improving AOD responses and outcomes for the communities we support.

10. Sector news, additional resources, and other upcoming events, training and webinars

- **Navigating the Care Act (NADA)**
  3 November, online: Webinar presented by Senior Solicitor Rachel Gregory, Health Justice Partnership at Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) discussing how you can best support clients in contact with DCJ and better understand child protection proceedings and referrals to legal support.

- **New NSW medicines and poisons legislation commences 5 November 2026**
  From 5 November 2026, new NSW medicines and poisons legislation will take effect, introducing important changes for healthcare providers involved in prescribing, supplying, storing and administering medicines. Stay informed about what's changing and how the new requirements may affect your service: https://cesphn.org.au/news/new-nsw-medicines-and-poisons-legislation-commences-5-november-2026

- **Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Aboriginal People Strengths Based Practices (NADA)** two-day workshop on 19 and 20 November in Western Sydney: https://nada.org.au/events/

- **Search by postcode to find AOD services**
  The Path2Help portal helps a person sift through hundreds of specialist AOD services to confidentially find what's right for them or their family or friend.

- **S-Check app to track methamphetamine use**
  The S-Check app supports people to track their methamphetamine use, helps people understand its impacts and offers research-based advice and information.

If you would like to discuss anything included in this newsletter, please contact our team at aod@cesphn.com.au

For more information on CESPHN funded AOD services visit our webpage