

❖ Chapter 7: Recommendations

The key findings from the five consumer participation demonstration projects have been used to identify five priority areas to act as an overarching framework for the recommendations and actions that follow. Although the key findings have been drawn from the specific issues and outcomes identified by the staff and consumers of the services involved in the demonstration projects, the key recommendations and actions take a broader 'services and systems' approach. In this regard, we have not sought to make recommendations that would be of relevance and benefit to the services involved in the demonstration projects alone. Instead, we have focused on the overarching themes and lessons learnt from the projects and have attempted to interpret these in a way that supports the further development and sustainability of consumer participation in all drug treatment settings. It should also be noted that while the recommendations have been clustered as appropriate under one of the five priority areas, there is significant interconnectedness across the areas and recommendations — these linkages have been identified as appropriate. While some of the recommendations and associated actions specify the need for resourcing, it should be taken as read that all of the recommended actions will require appropriate resourcing if they are to be implemented.

Priority Area 1: Increasing awareness and understanding of consumer participation

- **Training for staff of drug treatment services:**

Recommendation:

The development of a new consumer participation module within the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD).

Action:

AIVL to approach the National Centre in Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) and the Drug Strategy Branch, Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) to identify opportunities and pathways for the resourcing, development and implementation of the above module.

- **Training for consumers of drug treatment services:**

Recommendation:

The development of a national consumer participation in drug treatment training program and plan to support the delivery of consumer training at the local level.

Actions:

AIVL to approach the Drug Strategy Branch, DoHA to identify opportunities and pathways for the resourcing development and delivery of the above training program.

Should suitable resources be identified, the program would need to be developed and delivered in partnership with AIVL member organisations, other relevant advocacy groups and local consumer health forums.

- **Ongoing awareness raising in relation to consumer participation:**

Recommendation:

The development of a national communications strategy to address the lack of general awareness and understanding of both the concept and practice of consumer participation within the AOD sector and among drug treatment consumers.

Actions:

AIVL to seek placement of articles and editorial comment on the issue of consumer participation in key national AOD sector publications including, but not limited to, Of Substance, ANEX Bulletin, DANA Newsletter, etc.

AIVL and its member organisations to include articles and discussions on consumer participation and rights in drug user magazines, and provide articles for publications that target treatment consumers produced by other relevant organisations and services.

AIVL to seek a symposium or workshop at the Australasian Professional Society for Alcohol and Other Drugs (APSAD) Conference, which will focus on the definition of consumer participation in drug treatment settings, the value and benefits of consumer participation in this context, and practical strategies for developing and implementing consumer participation.

Priority Area 2: Making consumer participation ‘core business’ for drug treatment services

- **Developing the policy framework to support consumer participation:**

Recommendation:

The development of a national advocacy strategy to promote the need for a policy framework at the national and state/territory levels to provide leadership and underpin support for consumer participation in drug treatment settings.

Actions:

AIVL to develop a brief consumer participation advocacy paper to be disseminated to, and as appropriate used to inform meetings with, the drug policy units of federal and state/territory governments and other government and non-government drug policy and consumer health bodies including the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD), Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP), national and state/territory consumer health forums, etc.

AIVL and its member organisations to advocate for the inclusion of principles and outcome indicators to support consumer participation in drug treatment settings in national and state/territory drug strategies and other relevant policy documents.

- **Funding and resourcing consumer participation in drug treatment settings:**

Recommendation:

Federal and state/territory governments to take a leadership role in supporting drug treatment services to incorporate consumer participation into service planning and delivery.

Actions:

Governments should incorporate minimum consumer participation requirements (based on the AIVL Model of Consumer Participation) into performance and funding agreements for drug treatment services.

*(** It should be noted that responsibility for the above action will be with the federal or state/territory health departments, or a combination of the two, depending on the outcomes of national health system reforms currently underway. Based on the outcome of these reforms, this recommendation should be undertaken by the government entity(ies) with primary responsibility for funding government and non-government drug treatment services in the future.)*

Drug treatment services should be appropriately resourced to support and conduct consumer participation in drug treatment settings.

Should the above minimum requirements for consumer participation be incorporated into funding and performance agreements, AIVL and its member organisations should be resourced to provide expertise, partnership and support for drug treatment services in meeting such requirements.

AIVL will seek endorsement and support from the Chapter of Addictions Medicine, the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association (ATCA), APSAD and other relevant bodies in relation to the above role and in being a recognised source of expertise and support on consumer participation in drug treatment settings.

AIVL will seek to work in partnership with other national and local consumer advocacy organisations as appropriate.

Priority Area 3: Developing a stronger theoretical basis for consumer participation in drug treatment settings

• **Revising the AIVL definition and model of consumer participation in drug treatment settings:**

Recommendation:

To conduct a deeper analysis of the AIVL Definition and Model of Consumer Participation, including an exploration of definitions of 'who is a consumer', the concept of 'stability', 'who should represent consumers' and the significance of 'service type' for consumer participation.

Actions:

The NCHSR and AIVL to produce at least two peer-reviewed papers drawing on the findings and analysis of the TSU Project: Phase Two demonstration projects to further explore the definitions and issues identified above.

AIVL and the NCHSR to incorporate the ideas and thinking in the above peer-reviewed articles into the AIVL Definition and Model of Consumer Participation.

In addition to the above, AIVL and the NCHSR will incorporate a new section into the AIVL Definition and Model of Consumer Participation.

on 'who should represent treatment consumers' including:

- i. the concept of self-determination in relation to representation for different 'types' of treatment consumers;

- ii. appropriate consultative mechanisms to support the role of consumer representatives; and
- iii. the role of 'past treatment consumers' in the context of consumer participation in inpatient detoxification treatment settings and explore the potential value of other models of consumer participation in acute clinical care settings for application in the detoxification context.

Priority Area 4: Acknowledging and understanding power and empowerment in the drug treatment context

- **Managing dynamics and relationships between staff and consumers:**

Recommendation:

To provide opportunities for staff and consumers to discuss how power and empowerment operates within the drug treatment context and develop positive strategies for acknowledging and managing these dynamics.

Actions:

AIVL to ensure issues of power and empowerment are addressed within the training for staff and consumers outlined in Priority Area 1.

Senior management of drug treatment services to encourage regular reviews of service systems and practices to remove barriers to consumer participation.

- **Managing dynamics and relationships between consumer representatives and other treatment consumers:**

Recommendation:

To empower consumers to take a leadership role in consumer participation activities in order to support the development of consultative consumer participation structures and processes.

Actions:

Drug treatment services should work with consumers to define the role of consumer representative positions and to develop consumer participation structures that support ongoing consultation between consumer representatives and other service consumers.

Consumer participation training for drug treatment consumers should be open to all treatment consumers, not simply consumer representatives.

Priority Area 5: Engaging drug user organisations in consumer participation

Recommendation:

To support the greater involvement of drug user organisations in consumer participation in drug treatment settings.

Actions:

Training for services on working with drug user organisations should be included in funding and performance agreements for drug treatment services (also see Priority Area 2 for further actions on funding and performance agreements).

Drug user organisations should be appropriately supported and resourced to participate in consumer participation initiatives in drug treatment settings.