

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
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PROTECTING VICTORIANS FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUG HARMS

The Allan Labor Government is delivering Victoria's first ever strategy to combat alcohol and drug harms – focusing on saving lives by building a system that is better connected and capable of reaching more Victorians.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt has officially launched the *Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2035* – a key deliverable as part of the \$95 million Statewide Action Plan.

It is built on evidence, sector insights and the lived experience of Victorians, and outlines how the system will address new and emerging patterns of alcohol and other drug harms (AOD) use, as well as tackle stigma and improve the general health, mental health, and wellbeing of vulnerable Victorians.

The strategy outlines five priority areas including:

1. Better information and easier access to services, so people and families know exactly where to access help
2. Stronger and increased flexibility in harm reduction and treatment options
3. Culturally safe and self-determined responses for Aboriginal Victorians, codesigned with community
4. System innovation and continuous improvement to support the system to adapt to emerging drug trends
5. Greater coordination across mental health, housing, justice and other services.

Implementation will roll out through a series of delivery phases. The first phase will focus on strengthening existing AOD services and improving access to treatment, care and support.

It will see the trialing of naloxone dispensing machines so this safe medication can be more easily accessed at any time of day to help people in a life-or-death emergency.

It will also see the introduction of a 'Never Use Alone' overdose prevention and response helpline which will provide anonymous care and advice – reducing overdose risk and ensuring emergency services can respond faster if needed.

Additionally, the Labor Government will also partner with Aboriginal communities to deliver a culturally safe AOD implementation action plan to align with a commitment to improving health outcomes, agreed to in the National Closing the Gap agreement.

Over the next decade, the strategy will deliver a more compassionate, coordinated and connected system for the more than 40,000 Victorians who access it every year.

To read the *Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2035*, please visit health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-other-drugs/victorian-aod-strategy.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"This strategy is ambitious and outlines a 10-year path to reform our AOD system so it's more connected, culturally responsive and capable of meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable Victorians."

"We are driving this reform to ensure all the right resources, services and information are easily accessible – ensuring that no matter who you are, you are supported to access the healthcare that is right for you."

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