

# **ANACAD REPORT**

**July 2023 – December 2024**

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# INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

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The Australian National Advisory Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ANACAD) was established in December 2014 and is the principal expert advisory body to the Australian Government, providing expert advice on alcohol and other drug (AOD) matters of national significance. The Council reports to, and members are appointed by, the minister with portfolio responsibility for AOD issues. For the period June 2023 - December 2024, this was the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP (the Minister).

Membership of the Council consists of individuals with a broad range of expertise across the AOD sector and other relevant sectors. [Appendix A](#) contains the full membership list of the Council during the reporting period. The Council comprises 10 members (including the Chair), though subject matter experts may be engaged as deemed appropriate by ANACAD.

This Final Report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by ANACAD between 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024. The information provided in this report is for the Australian Government and public release, as per the operational guidelines of the Council.

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## 1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

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### *Role of the Council*

ANACAD:

- reports directly to the minister responsible for drugs and alcohol policy within the Health portfolio
- provides confidential advice to the minister on current and emerging drug and alcohol issues.

ANACAD will:

1. Report to the Australian Government through the portfolio Minister with policy responsibility for AOD policy issues.
2. ANACAD has the ability to raise AOD issues with other Ministers whose policy responsibility intersects or overlaps with AOD policy. The Minister with policy responsibility for AOD must be copied into all correspondence.
3. Support the Australian Government by providing confidential, strategic, evidence-based advice on:
  - a. AOD use and related problems;

- b. Identified priorities on policy, related regulation, prevention, demand reduction, supply reduction and control, harm reduction and treatment of national importance;
    - c. work collaboratively with the Department of Health in order to provide expertise in regards to complex AOD policy development;
    - d. AOD issues among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations; and,
    - e. Respond to requests from the Minister as required.
  4. Advise on and support all relevant strategies and frameworks that provide short-term demonstrable gains, and longer-term strategic implications on AOD policy and program work.
  5. Advise on and support the Australian Government's contribution to the *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026*, the *National Preventive Health Strategy* and accompanying national frameworks.
  6. Provide advice on AOD policy and regulation, prevention, demand reduction, supply reduction and control, harm reduction, treatment and workforce activities, including activities to be progressed through the National Drugs Campaign.
  7. Provide an annual report to the Minister.
  8. Engage as appropriate with key experts such as community and family members, people with lived experience, law enforcement and treatment personnel, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise.
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### 1.3 ANACAD PRIORITY AREAS

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Consistent with the previous year's Work Plan, the following priority areas were agreed upon by ANACAD at the June and August 2023 meetings:

- Primary care
- Governance
- Workforce (including peer workforce)
- Stigma and discrimination
- Stocktake and review of government strategies with relevance to AOD.

The provision of ad hoc or rapid advice on emerging issues also formed an ongoing component of the Council's work over the reporting period.

# ACTIVITIES OF ANACAD 2023-2024

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## 2.1 KEY ADVICE & ACHIEVEMENTS

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ANACAD actively engaged with the Minister and the Australian Government during the reporting period and has provided expert advice on a range of AOD priorities, as outlined below.

### Strategy stocktake

ANACAD agreed to undertake this piece of work to examine where national strategies had worked well, and where there may be opportunities for further progress. Priority areas of each were mapped against actions and initiatives, particularly those that were feasible but not implemented.

This was one of the first activities the Council completed against its Work Plan. The primary focus was a review of the core AOD strategies, such as: the *National Drug Strategy*; the *National Alcohol Strategy*; the *National FASD Strategic Action Plan*; and the *National Ice Action Strategy*. The *National Preventive Health Strategy* was also included given its national AOD targets.

ANACAD submitted the strategy stocktake to the Minister following the August 2023 meeting alongside key opportunities for action. ANACAD's advice centred on improved access to screening, brief interventions and referrals to treatment in primary care, development of a specific First Nations strategy, revised funding models and a dedicated workforce strategy.

The Council continued to consider this stocktake as a foundational resource and has encouraged Government to draw on it as the next iteration of the *National Drug Strategy* is developed.

### Workforce

The AOD workforce was identified as a critical issue requiring immediate action. ANACAD continued to consider the significant issues impacting the AOD workforce, not limited to:

- Insecure employment
- Ageing cohort of addiction medicine specialists
- Lack of training and development opportunities
- Professional stigma
- Absence of a dedicated national AOD workforce strategy.

ANACAD has reiterated these issues and provided advice to Government regarding potential policy levers. However, an effective workforce strategy is required to enable further progress across all remits of the Work Plan.

## *Primary care*

Enhancing the capacity of the primary care system to respond to AOD harms was identified as a priority for ANACAD as primary care settings are the first point of call for most people experiencing or requiring AOD treatment, prevention and harm.

ANACAD established a Primary Care Working Group (PCWG), as part of the August 2023 meeting, to consider current issues, connections to Government's primary care reforms and potential reform actions relevant to AOD. The PCWG met on several occasions and with key departmental officials to progress this agenda.

The Council's discussions highlighted the need for:

- Greater integration and coordination of care within the primary care sector, particularly to support a workforce uplift and expand the scope of practice for allied health professionals to address complex AOD-related issues.
- Shared care across different services, which can help break down silos and ensure that individuals receive comprehensive and continuous support.
- Embedding a multidisciplinary care model that engages the peer workforce, fostering a blend of lived experience and professional expertise to build trust and better serve those affected by AOD-related harm.
- Repackaging primary health and preventive care initiatives to better reach marginalised and priority populations. This would significantly improve health equity outcomes, with consideration to the stigma and discrimination these populations often face.

In correspondence to the Minister, ANACAD acknowledged the complexities of, and opportunities presented within, Government's primary care reform agenda.

The Council submitted preliminary views of practical policy solutions to Government based on the *Review of General Practice Incentives*, *Review of After Hours Primary Care Programs and Policy*, *Working Better for Medicare Review*, and the *Scope of Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review* reports following the November 2024 meeting. However, acknowledged this matter will remain an ongoing priority for the incoming Council (whose term commences from 2025).

## Governance

ANACAD added governance to its Work Plan as AOD is a whole-of-government, whole-of-life matter that requires coordinated and collaborative effort across all governments and portfolios. Following the cessation of the Council of Australian Governments governance structures (including the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum) in 2020, the Council identified a critical opportunity to support considerations of suitable governance fora.

The Council considered several possible mechanisms and agreed on five integral principles:

- Joint decision-making capacity
- Shared responsibility across jurisdictions and across portfolios
- Transparent and accountable
- Able to deliver effective policy design (access to appropriate expertise)
- Reduce duplication and waste through co-ordinated investment.

Advice was provided to the Minister in February 2024 following substantial discussion of potential future governance options to progress key AOD policy matters. This included two primary options to convene an AOD Ministerial Council (to include ministers from all jurisdictions with portfolio responsibility for AOD related issues) or Joint AOD Council (which would also include Local Government and sector representatives, in addition to ministers from all jurisdictions).

## Stigma and discrimination

Stigma and discrimination surrounding the use of AOD are endemic and complex, with harmful impacts on individuals and communities. The Council prioritised this matter as stigma and discrimination have remained stubbornly high, impacting investment, perception of prevention efforts and help-seeking, and intervention outcomes.

The February/March 2024 meeting focused on systemic stigma. A dedicated Stigma and Discrimination Working Group (SDWG) was established to consider pathways forward in addressing the stigma and discrimination associated with AOD use. ANACAD agreed that the focus should be on structural stigma, though it can be difficult to separate many aspects as they are all interlinked.

Given the longstanding nature of this challenge and gradual changes required to influence perceptions of AOD use, the Council agreed to continue this work over future terms. The Council has continued to highlight the need to elevate living and lived experience of AOD users to drive change.

## Ad hoc advice

As part of its core business, ANACAD remained available to provide rapid advice as needed or requested by Government.

Following the announcement by the Prime Minister that the Commonwealth would undertake an expert-led rapid review of prevention approaches to gender-based violence<sup>1</sup>, ANACAD provided advice to the Minister regarding a range of potential policy options that could reduce harm. Following discussions at the June 2024 meeting, ANACAD acknowledged alcohol as a key risk factor and highlighted the importance of ensuring any resultant actions do not inadvertently increase stigma and discrimination.

ANACAD also recommended the *National Guidelines for Medication-Assisted Treatment of Opioid Dependence* be reviewed and updated to include more recent treatment options and raised the emergence of synthetic drugs as an issue requiring Government attention.

The Council also discussed concerns regarding alcohol labelling with Assistant Minister Kearney at the September 2024 meeting, as evidence from the Food Standards Australia New Zealand indicated health labelling (especially carbohydrate and sugar content) may lead to incorrect perceptions of the healthiness of alcohol. Advice was submitted to the Minister in this regard, noting that alcohol labels should not include any indication that they may have health benefits as this would undermine other efforts to prevent alcohol-related harm.

Recommendations for responding to synthetic drugs were made to the Minister and included scaling up the opioid dependence treatment and Naloxone programs, increasing investment in research and pilot programs, increasing capacity within health and other systems, and supporting robust information gathering domestically and internationally. A coordinated, consistent and structured approach, including appropriate data triangulation and use, would be supported by an effective governance mechanism.

The ANACAD Work Plan outlined the Council's activity until the end of its term (31 December 2024). Key outcomes from each meeting were published as communiques on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website for transparency, while retaining the confidential nature of advice provided to the Minister.

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## 2.2 MEETINGS AND ENGAGEMENTS

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### ANACAD meetings and guests

ANACAD met on six occasions between July 2023 and December 2024:

- 29-30 August 2023 – Central Coast, NSW
- 23-24 November 2023 – Adelaide, SA
- 29 February-1 March 2024 – Adelaide, SA
- 13-14 June 2024 – Adelaide, SA
- 18-19 September 2024 – Melbourne, VIC
- 13-14 November 2024 – Adelaide, SA.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/womens-safety/rapid-review-prevention-approaches>



ANACAD hosted the following guest presenters at these engagements:

Meeting	Attendee	Organisation
23-24 November 2023	Dr Gabrielle Phillips	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
23-24 November 2023	Dr Louise Tierney	AIHW
23-24 November 2023	Chris Killick-Moran	AIHW
23-24 November 2023	Bridget Gilmour-Walsh	Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)
23-24 November 2023	Tony Manderson	TGA
29 February-1 March 2024	Dr Gabrielle Phillips	AIHW
29 February-1 March 2024	Dr Louise Tierney	AIHW
29 February-1 March 2024	Parker Blakey	AIHW
29 February-1 March 2024	Mel Benson	Mindframe
29 February-1 March 2024	John Gobeil	Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)
29 February-1 March 2024	Ele Morison	AIVL
29 February-1 March 2024	Associate Professor Loren Brener	University of NSW, Centre for Social Research in Health
13-14 June 2024	Professor Daniel Fatovich	Emerging Drugs Network of Australia (EDNA)
13-14 June 2024	Dr Jessamine Soderstrom	EDNA
13-14 June 2024	Dr Jennifer Smith	EDNA
13-14 June 2024	Dr Courtney Weber	EDNA
13-14 June 2024	Professor Nadine Ezard	Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)
13-14 June 2024	Dr Brendan Clifford	NCCRED
13-14 June 2024	Associate Professor Amy Peacock	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)

Meeting	Attendee	Organisation
13-14 June 2024	Dr Hester Wilson	Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Addiction Specialist Interest Group
18-19 September 2024	Dr Katie Willis	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC)
18-19 September 2024	Shane Nielson	ACIC
18-19 September 2024	Jenny Taylor	Market Research Unit Section, Department of Health and Aged Care
18-19 September 2024	Professor Katherine Mills	Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use (Matilda Centre)
18-19 September 2024	Associate Professor Christina Marel	Matilda Centre
18-19 September 2024	Mark Roddam	Primary Care Division, Department of Health and Aged Care
13-14 November 2024	Nicola Pike	Ernst & Young (EY)
13-14 November 2024	Amy Monk	EY

### Engagement with the community and sector

Throughout this period, ANACAD undertook consultation through engaging with guest presenters and relevant subject matter experts, including those listed above. The decision to use these targeted presentations was made by ANACAD in the desire to focus efforts on providing evidence-based advice to Government through key areas outlined in the Work Plan.

The August 2023 meeting on the Central Coast also allowed ANACAD members to engage in public consultation with community members and AOD service providers.

### Engagement with Ministers

ANACAD met with the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, during the 29 February-1 March 2024 and 13-14 June 2024 meetings, both of which were held in Adelaide.

The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, attended the September 2024 meeting.

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## APPENDIX A: ANACAD MEMBERSHIP

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ANACAD Membership from 1 July 2023-31 December 2024:

Appointee	Key related experience
Professor Michael Farrell – Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed Chair of ANACAD on 23 May 2023</li> <li>Professor and Director, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of NSW</li> <li>Director, Australasian Professional Society for Alcohol and Other Drugs</li> <li>Director, Odyssey House NSW</li> <li>Provided Consultancies to UN, UNODC and National Governments on Drug Policies</li> </ul>
Georgie Harman – Deputy Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed Deputy Chair of ANACAD in January 2022</li> <li>Interim Chair of ANACAD from 1 January to 31 March 2023</li> <li>CEO of Beyond Blue</li> <li>Former Deputy CEO of the National Mental Health Commission</li> <li>Previously responsible for Commonwealth policy and investment in mental health, suicide prevention, tobacco control, substance misuse, cancer and chronic disease at the (formerly) Commonwealth Department of Health</li> </ul>
Professor Steve Allsop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed Member of ANACAD in December 2014</li> <li>Deputy Chair of ANACAD from February 2015 to December 2021</li> <li>Professor National Drug Research Institute</li> <li>Board member, Australian Drug Foundation</li> <li>Chair of Western Australian Alcohol and other Drug Advisory Board</li> <li>Significant experience in drug and alcohol policy, prevention and treatment research and practice</li> <li>Previously worked in senior state government and university positions</li> </ul>
Associate Professor Robert Ali AO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed Member of ANACAD in December 2014</li> <li>Senior Research Fellow, University of Adelaide</li> <li>Former Director of World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre at University of Adelaide</li> <li>Member of WHO Expert Advisory panel on Drug dependence and Alcohol problems</li> <li>Former Director of Community Based Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia</li> <li>Appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to medical and health research, particularly drug and alcohol dependence, and to education and training</li> </ul>

Professor Nicole Lee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2018</li> <li>• CEO, 360Edge</li> <li>• Adjunct Professor, National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University</li> <li>• Interim CEO, Chair Clinical Governance Subcommittee, Hello Sunday Morning</li> <li>• Board member, The Loop Australia</li> <li>• Alcohol and other drug advisor, Department of Veterans' Affairs</li> <li>• Significant experience in alcohol and other drug policy, practice and research</li> </ul>
Rebecca Lang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2018</li> <li>• CEO of Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies</li> <li>• Former Accreditation Framework Coordinator, WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies</li> <li>• Director, Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council</li> </ul>
Jack Nagle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2018</li> <li>• Lived experience and recovery advocate</li> <li>• Contributed to the development of the 'Cracks in the ice' program</li> <li>• Former Manager, DayHab Addiction Treatment Centre</li> </ul>
Joe Coyte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2021</li> <li>• Executive Director of The Glen Drug and Rehabilitation Centres (Men and Women)</li> <li>• CEO of The Glen Men Drug and Rehabilitation Centre</li> <li>• Director, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Residential Rehabilitation Network</li> <li>• Member, BARANG - Aboriginal Regional Alliance of the Central Coast</li> <li>• Previous Board Member, Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies</li> <li>• Previous Specialist Director, Wellington Aboriginal Health Service</li> </ul>
Dr Erin Lalor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2022</li> <li>• CEO of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation</li> <li>• Deputy Chair, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</li> <li>• Leadership experience in the health sector, working in clinical, academic and executive roles</li> <li>• Sits on a number of advisory committees in relation to public health, clinical improvements and evidence-based approaches to healthcare delivery</li> </ul>
Nicky Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed Member of ANACAD in January 2022</li> <li>• CEO of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia</li> <li>• Former Director of LGBTI Health Programming and Development, ACON</li> <li>• Former Manager of the Harm Reduction and Viral Hepatitis Branch at the NSW Ministry of Health</li> <li>• Former CEO of the NSW Users and AIDS Association</li> <li>• Worked in several other senior positions in state and national drug user organisations</li> </ul>

The ANACAD Secretariat function was provided by the Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch of the Department of Health and Aged Care.