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Victoria Kostadinov
Senior Research Officer: Review and Revision of the National Alcohol and Other
Drug Workforce Development Strategy

National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA),
Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute (FHMRI)

Via email: ncetaconsultations@flinders.edu.au

To the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction,

Response to National AOD Workforce Development Strategy Discussion Paper

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

ACTCOSS welcomes the discussion paper concerning a review of the National Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Development Strategy. ACTCOSS acknowledges Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) as the representative and peak body for the ACT AOD sector and fully supports their submission to the strategy and discussion paper.

In the context of the ACT, ACTCOSS would like to take this opportunity to highlight some key issues for consideration by NCETA when revising and reviewing its recommendations on the AOD workforce, including:

- ACTCOSS advocates for improved standards for AOD sector workers. The need to address underlying challenges in the AOD workforce is underpinned by low recruitment rates often attributed to poor remuneration and lacking benefits. The attractiveness of working in the AOD sector is significantly impacted by low salaries in addition to unavailability (and in some jurisdictions unaffordability) of training.

- There is also a demonstrable need for assurances of cultural competency and diversity within the AOD workforce. The AOD sector needs to be informed by a strong understanding of the diversity within the community particularly those who are most vulnerable to experiences of problematic AOD use. Likewise, the workforce must be well-equipped to cater to a diversity of individuals through appropriate training and inclusion practices to inform specialised services.
- ACTCOSS observes that the definition of minimum educational qualification standards for AOD workers in the ACT is a fundamental building block contributing to the high quality of services generally provided (as verified in the Service Users Satisfaction and Outcomes Surveys (SUSOS) administered on a single day for all services every three years in the ACT). The full funding and subsidisation of training under the ACT Qualification Strategy, has been important for the ACT in ensuring quality of service and professionalisation of the sector.
- We support a national definition of minimum education standards for AOD workers building on the established practices in ACT and Victoria.
- Workforce development in the AOD sector requires the integration of adequate funding for professional development in order to meet quality standards. ACTCOSS encourages the integration of this into funding arrangements through direct grants or service delivery contracts.
- ACTCOSS also recommends that the National AOD Workforce Development Strategy is linked with other health and community sector workforce strategies in each state and territory.

Overall, the process of preparing the National AOD Workforce Development Strategy Discussion Paper has been timely and comprehensive, and we hope that NCETA will continue to implement community feedback – particularly that which has been provided by ATODA.

While we appreciate consultation on workforce strategy, we do not believe that we need a national workforce survey. Most funding in AOD services is state/territory based and so we need data that is jurisdiction specific, rather than national.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or any specific questions relevant to ACTCOSS work in the sector.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam R.', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Adam Poulter
Deputy Chief Executive Officer

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