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Manager, Policy Development
Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Directorate
Department of Health
GPO Box 125
Hobart TAS 7001

2 November 2018

Dear Sylvia,

Re: Reform Agenda for Alcohol and Drug Services in Tasmania - Consultation Draft

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response in relation to the Draft Reform Agenda for Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) in Tasmania.

YNOT is the peak body for young people and the non government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT advocates for the needs and initiatives of young people and the youth sector, and aims to increase the participation and contribution of young people in Tasmania. We represent the interests of approximately 78,000 young people, 60 member organisations and 300 youth sector workers, through our regional networks, statewide.

As the peak body for youth affairs, YNOT supports the eight reform directions outlined in the draft consultation document. YNOT acknowledges the magnitude and complexity of work that is proposed in the document however; we believe it is important that the Reform Agenda makes a clear distinction between the youth AOD service system and adult AOD service system in some areas.

It's important to note that YNOT's response does not cover all areas outlined in the Reform Agenda and will focus primarily on Reform Directions 1 and 2. YNOT understands that each reform direction is fundamentally linked.

Reform Direction 1: An Integrated Service System

In planning for a seamless integrated AOD service system in Tasmania, YNOT believes further consideration is required in relation to the integration of youth AOD services.

Currently, Reform Direction One does not differentiate between the youth AOD service system and the adult AOD service system in Tasmania. This distinction is important, as young people require youth specific, developmentally appropriate AOD treatment services that are vastly different from adult AOD services¹.

¹ Bruun, A. (2015) The Victorian Youth Alcohol and Other Drug Service System: A vision realised. 2015. Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Victoria.



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ynot is the peak body representing the voice of Tasmanian youth



There is a plethora of research available that highlights the unique developmental changes that occur during adolescence. Young people experience rapid changes in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional and social development². This coupled with substance use, co-occurring conditions and complex psychosocial issues reinforces the need for a specialised, targeted and integrated youth AOD service system.

Youth AOD service providers in Tasmania generally engage and connect with youth specific service systems to respond to the complex psychosocial needs of young people experiencing problematic substance use issues. This includes but is not limited to youth justice, child safety services, adolescent mental health services, youth accommodation services, schools and local youth services and groups. Currently, it is not clear how the youth AOD service system will be integrated in the new system.

Challenges experienced by youth AOD services are not dissimilar to those facing the broader AOD treatment services system identified in the Siggins Miller Report³ including; a lack of consistent information on how to identify/access services, lengthy distances to travel to services and lack of integration and communication between services.

YNOT members have reported that the youth AOD service system is largely fragmented. This includes a lack of integration between existing youth AOD services, as well as youth service systems more broadly, and inconsistent information in relation to service accessibility and referral pathways. There is also an apparent lack of communication between government and non-government youth AOD services in some regions. It's important to note however that there are some examples of effective integration between youth AOD service providers in the government and non government sector particularly in the North West of the State.

YNOT believes emphasis should be placed on improving collaboration and integration between youth AOD services and the youth service system in Tasmania to enhance the provision of holistic, continuous care to young people experiencing substance use issues. Consideration needs to be given as to how a continuum model of care, using a stepped care approach, will apply in the youth context and how the youth AOD service system will intersect with the adult AOD service system. Ensuring that young people can seamlessly transition into the adult AOD service system to continue treatment is essential in supporting individuals to reach their treatment goals and improve health outcomes.

Improved collaboration and service integration could be further enhanced by the introduction of a contemporary data collection and management system. The collection of consistent, reliable data will allow the youth AOD sector to develop a better understanding of a client's journey through treatment services and will assist youth AOD services to support clients more effectively in achieving their goals.

YNOT believes it is vital for youth AOD treatment services to be recognised and acknowledged as an important part of an integrated AOD service system in Tasmania. An effective and integrated youth AOD service system can reduce the economic and social

² NSW Kids and Families.(2014). Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers. NSW Kids and Families: Sydney.

³ Siggins Miller. (2017). A Single Tasmanian Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Service System Framework: Final Report.

costs associated with drug use including adverse health outcomes, ongoing drug dependency, long term unemployment and criminal activity to name a few⁴.

The Reform Agenda provides an opportunity to enhance, strengthen and integrate the youth AOD youth service system into a seamless integrated AOD service system in Tasmania.

Reform Direction 2: Developing Service Specifications and Program Guidelines

It is pleasing to see that youth services have been specifically identified in the development of service specifications and guidelines and that young people have been identified as a priority population group under Reform Direction 5.

There is a diverse range of youth AOD services currently operating in Tasmania; however YNOT believes further consideration needs to be given to the efficacy of existing service types, service gaps and barriers to young people accessing treatment.

A key service gap identified by the Siggins Miller Report⁵ was the unmet demand for residential rehabilitation services for young people in Tasmania. Whilst YNOT acknowledges that the demand for residential rehabilitation is not sufficient to warrant a standalone facility, it is imperative that the model adopted to deliver youth residential rehabilitation services is youth specific and is independent from adult residential facilities. It is widely understood that it is not appropriate for young people, particularly those under 18 years, to engage with the adult AOD service system. Young people can be at risk of exposure to entrenched drug use, anti social behaviour and role modelling and exploitation by adult clients⁶.

Evidence suggests that young people are often not inclined to seek help from professionals to address health related concerns. Barriers include services not being youth friendly, fear of confidentiality being broken, lack of trust in services, fear of stigma and discrimination and lack of awareness on how to access services⁷. Members of the 2018 Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) on Health and Wellbeing identified stigma and lack of accurate information as a barrier to accessing AOD services in Tasmania⁸. Transport, particularly in rural and remote areas, was also identified as a barrier to service accessibility.

In developing service specifications and program guidelines a range of integrated service types needs to be considered to effectively engage and retain young people in AOD treatment. This is particularly pertinent given that young people are less inclined to seek help and are generally reluctant to attend treatment in clinical settings⁹. The delivery of flexible and responsive outreach services in a variety of settings, particularly in areas where young people congregate, would contribute to improved service accessibility and better health outcomes. This is particularly relevant for young people living in rural and remote areas where transport is an issue and highly vulnerable, marginalised groups of young people with limited support networks and resources. Consideration should also be given to

⁴ Bruun, A. (2015) The Victorian Youth Alcohol and Other Drug Service System: A vision realised. 2015. Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Victoria.

⁵ Siggins Miller. (2017). A Single Tasmanian Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Service System Framework: Final Report.

⁶ Bruun, A. (2015) The Victorian Youth Alcohol and Other Drug Service System: A vision realised. 2015. Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Victoria.

⁷ NSW Ministry of Health. (2014). Substance Use and Young People Framework.

⁸ Youth Network of Tasmania. 2018. The Tasmanian Youth Forum Report on Health and Wellbeing: What Young People Said.

⁹ Youth Drugs and Alcohol Advice (YoDDA). 2018. Developmentally Appropriate Screening and Assessment: <http://www.yodaa.org.au/workers/developmentally-appropriate-screening-and-assessment>

other service types including day programs, online telephone counselling and support and specialist youth AOD programs that target particular groups of young people including Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

TYF members at the 2018 Forum on Health and Wellbeing reinforced the need for a range of integrated AOD service types for young people. Young people aged 12-25 identified the need for more outreach services, safe houses, online and face to face services as well as increased education and awareness of AOD issues. This was particularly important, as young people want to make informed decisions, be aware of risks and learn how to stay safe. One TYF member explained that it is important to 'learn safely what can go wrong'¹⁰.

A range of prevention, early intervention and treatment services need to be available in a variety of settings to respond to the diverse needs of young people experiencing mild to severe substance use issues. YNOT believes it is essential to work collaboratively with young people and their families, the youth sector and youth AOD experts to identify the most appropriate service types for the Tasmanian context. It is important that services are client centred, youth friendly, accessible, developmentally appropriate, evidence based, highly responsive and flexible.

YNOT supports the development of common assessment, admission, referral and discharge forms across all youth AOD services however it is important that assessment and data collection tools are youth specific to engage and retain young people in AOD treatment. Screening and assessment tools must be developmentally appropriate, client centred and designed from a strengths based perspective.

Turning Point, Addiction, Education and Research Centre in Victoria are currently working with the Victorian youth AOD sector to develop a suite of common assessment tools for young people¹¹. There may be the opportunity to work collaboratively with youth AOD specialists in other jurisdictions, in addition to the Tasmanian AOD youth sector, to develop a suite of common assessment tools for consistent use across all youth AOD services in Tasmania.

YNOT welcomes the development and implementation of a Youth Framework for the AOD sector in collaboration with the youth sector as outlined in Reform Direction 5 however, it is important that young people and their family/carers are involved in the process to share their views and contribute to solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity the opportunity to comment on the Draft Reform Agenda for Alcohol and Drug Services in Tasmania.

Kind regards,



Tania Hunt
Chief Executive Officer
Youth Network of Tasmania

¹⁰ Youth Network of Tasmania. 2018. The Tasmanian Youth Forum Report on Health and Wellbeing: What Young People Said.

¹¹ Youth Drugs and Alcohol Advice (YoDDA). 2018. Screening and Assessment: <http://yodaa.org.au/workers/screening-assessment>.