



Substance  
Misuse  
Limestone  
Coast

Global Problems, Local Solutions



Limestone Coast  
Local Government  
Association

Media Release – January 21, 2022

## **MOUNT GAMBIER AOD DETOX BED PLEDGE WELCOMED BY SMLC**

Substance Misuse Limestone Coast has welcomed Labor’s \$4.7m pledge for dedicated drug and alcohol detox beds, saying the region is facing a shortage of alcohol and other drug (AOD) services at a time when demand is rising.

On Friday, the South Australian Labor Party announced they would commit \$23.9m towards a major upgrade of Mount Gambier & Districts Hospital if they form government at the State Election in March, including the fit-out and operational costs of two dedicated drug and alcohol detox beds.

Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) Project Officer Sophie Bouchier welcomed the announcement, saying the Limestone Coast was in dire need of extra AOD services and funding.

“Currently, people in need of medically managed alcohol detoxification are having to travel to Adelaide for treatment as it’s not available in the Mount Gambier Hospital, so this is good news,” she said.

“There is also a significant need for more AOD specific counselling. At the beginning of 2021, the Limestone Coast had 3.7 FTE alcohol and other drug specific counsellors and now there are just two counsellors to cover a catchment of 65,000 people.”

The rise in alcohol use and lack of related services had emerged as one of the key points from SMLC’s Limestone Coast AOD Regional Summit held in late 2021, which was attended by frontline workers, service providers and local MPs.

“Alcohol is the most commonly used substance and the most problematic and the pandemic has created a perfect storm of normalising at-home alcohol use with retail sales increased by up to 10 per cent,” Ms Bouchier said.

“It’s legal, cheap, accessible and marketed aggressively by alcohol companies. It’s normalised and encouraged across all levels of society and a rite of passage in Australian culture.”

Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said a lack of available services compromised client outcomes, resulting in a ripple effect for the whole community.

“When someone is ready for help, clinical assessment by a GP or trained AOD worker is the first step,” she said.

“So, if they have to wait to access an AOD worker, their use may escalate and they may find themselves at the hospital emergency department with physical injuries or overdose.

“Instead, a full spectrum of services must be there when people are ready to get the help they need.”

SMLC Board Chair Andy Stott said the announcement was great news for the region.

“I cannot stress enough the need for State level support for what we are endeavouring to achieve in the Limestone Coast of South Australia,” he said.

“Our Regional Summit found regional resource depletion is a major issue that many agencies are grappling with.

“Just as the need for services is rising, the services themselves are dwindling, or are not even there. The Limestone Coast community deserves better.

“We are committed to working together with service agencies and the community to better understand our region’s needs, both now and into the future.”

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**Media contact:** Project Officer Sophie Bouchier | M: 0429 342 175 | E: [sophiebouchier@smlc.com.au](mailto:sophiebouchier@smlc.com.au)