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Limestone Coast
Local Government
Association

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KEY THEMES EMERGE FROM LIMESTONE COAST AOD REGIONAL SUMMIT

A Limestone Coast AOD Regional Summit has heard an ‘information void’ is preventing people from accessing alcohol and other drug services and a need has been identified for services to incorporate peer support workers with lived experience.

The summit, hosted by Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC), was held in Mount Gambier on November 4 and was attended by more than 40 frontline workers involved in the alcohol and other drug sector across the region.

Member for Mount Gambier Troy Bell, Member for MacKillop Nick McBride and the Hon. Clare Scriven MLC also attended the summit.

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said a range of issues and themes had emerged during the full-day workshop, which was designed to unite the region’s AOD sector.

“One of the key themes to emerge was the need for initial AOD assessment training for those frontline community services away from the sector,” she said.

“This would help people get health information and an immediate referral process for the appropriate services.

“We’ve also discovered there is an overall lack of knowledge about the services that are currently available, both for the person in need of help and for those actually working in the non-government sector.

“At the summit, we heard most clients are referrals from other services, which is great but also shows us that the average person has no idea what is out there.

“Websites are not updated, have incorrect information or are full of industry jargon such as acronyms and programs that mean very little to the average person. If people cannot find or understand the services, how can they begin to access help?”

Another key theme to emerge was the need for peer support workers with lived experience, integrated in current service delivery, Ms Bouchier said.

“These people who may live in the local community and have lived experience are incredibly valuable in the months and years following a person’s initial assessment and/or treatment to provide ongoing support,” she said.

Ms Bouchier said the next few weeks would involve sorting through the event feedback and assessing the region’s needs moving forward.

“SMLC will be advocating on behalf of the sector to bring the training and resources the Limestone Coast needs,” she said.

“From the feedback already received, people got a lot out of the day and want the summit to be a regular annual event. It makes sense to have us all working towards a common goal.”

A long-term approach to understanding the drivers behind alcohol and other drug use within regional communities was also raised by summit attendees.

In his presentation, guest speaker Michael White, the Executive Officer of South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services (SANDAS) said the timing of the summit was important, ahead of the State and Federal elections in 2022.

“Part of the summit was trying to get the message out to politicians, both State and Federal, about the absolute essential need for increased funding,” he said.

“When funding stops, there’s going to be a significant drop in services available for people in the community,” he said.

“We need to see that drug and alcohol treatment is essentially the same as mental health or any other chronic condition.

“Through the pandemic, we’ve seen significant investments in mental health and general health, however, there’s not been a significant investment in drug and alcohol services.”

Mr White encouraged anyone seeking help to visit the Know your Options website at www.knowyouroptions.sa.gov.au or call the ADIS helpline on 1300 13 13 40, a confidential telephone service for immediate assistance.

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Media contact: Project Officer Sophie Bouchier | M: 0429 342 175 | E: sophiebourchier@smlc.com.au