

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG SECTOR: AN EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF THE STATE AND TERRITORY PEAK BODIES

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Introduction / Issues: Widespread agreement exists in the AOD sector about the importance of capacity building (CB). The national AOD Peaks Capacity Building Network (PCBN) commissioned a national evaluation of their CB work with the aim of better understanding the nature of CB in our field, and the outcomes that it has produced.

Method/Approach: An external, independent evaluation was commissioned. The Utilisation-Focused Evaluation model was employed. The evaluation was conducted over the period 2012-2015, and covered all 6 states plus the ACT. The data collected covered the CB activities of the peak bodies over two years and the views and experiences of those activities provided by survey respondents and key informants. The underlying program theory was explored and assessed.

Key Findings: The evaluation found that CB was the main activity of the NGO AOD peak bodies. The main strategies employed were building sustainable linkages and strategic partnerships, and assisting AOD services to undertake service improvement. This work has produced valued changes with respect to service user outcomes, organisational change within AOD agencies, and changes at the AOD system level.

Discussions and Conclusions: The evaluation has confirmed the importance of CB work in our sector, the key role of the NGO peak bodies in this, and the need to maintain the effort into the future, despite funding uncertainties.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The evaluation has produced findings and recommendations that inform policy-making on the targeting of scarce CB resources and improving the delivery of CB activities.

Implications for Translational Research: The evaluation's findings support the notion that the key focus of contemporary CB work needs to be using research-based knowledge to improve the effectiveness of workers and services in the AOD field, as well as the sector as a whole.

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