

Alcohol and Other Drugs  
Advisory Board



# Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board Annual Activity Report

2024-2025



**This resource was prepared by:**

Mental Health Commission  
GPO Box X2299  
Perth Business Centre WA 6847

**Secretariat contact details**

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board  
can be contacted at [AODAB@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:AODAB@mhc.wa.gov.au)

**Acknowledgement of Country**

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of this country and its waters. The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board wishes to pay its respects to Elders past and present and extend this to all First Nations Australian people seeing this message.

**Accessibility**

This publication is available in alternative formats for people with a disability, on request to the Mental Health Commission.

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**Recognition of Lived and Living Experience**

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board recognises the individual and collective expertise of those with living and lived experience of alcohol and other drug, mental health issues and suicidal crisis, including families, carers and significant others.

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# Commissioner, Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs

**I would like to acknowledge the valuable role of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board (AODAB) in providing expert and strategic advice to the Mental Health Commission (Commission) and Western Australian Government. This guidance supports our efforts to ensure all Western Australians can access the health care they need, when they need it, and to prevent and reduce harms from alcohol and other drugs across Western Australia.**

The Western Australian Government is delivering a range of reforms to strengthen its approach to alcohol and other drugs and broader health system governance to support Western Australians to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. This reform package included the establishment of a dedicated Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs in 2024, which is responsible for leading system-wide strategic policy efforts. The Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs proactively works with the other areas of the Commission to alleviate the focus on alcohol and other drug related issues. This includes the commissioning of treatment and support services, strategic workforce development and delivery; engagement of Lived and Living Experience; delivery of prevention and wellbeing programs and services; provision of Aboriginal policy and cultural governance; and systems performance, monitoring and evaluation.

Elevating the focus on alcohol and other drugs and driving positive change is a collective responsibility, requiring interagency and cross-sector coordination and collaboration. The collective expertise of the AODAB, along with its independent insights

into emerging issues within the community and contemporary practices continues to play a key role in helping the Commission remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of the community. The diverse experiences of the AODAB adds value to the range of work the Commission undertakes with our partner organisations.

Since establishment of the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs, I have been pleased to see the AODAB and Commission staff working together to strengthen collaboration and refine our process and practices. Their efforts ensure strategic planning is consistently guided by expert advice and sector insights with the common goal of supporting the health and wellbeing of Western Australians. Looking to 2026 and beyond, I welcome ongoing advice from the expanded membership of the AODAB.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing dedication of the AODAB members in this reporting period, and in particular Chairperson Emeritus Professor Steve Allsop and Deputy Chairperson Julia Stafford.

# About the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board

**The AODAB is established pursuant to s.14 of the *Alcohol and Other Drugs Act 1974* (the Act) to provide feedback and advice to the Commissioner, Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs (Commissioner), on key projects and priorities of the Commission.**

Members of the AODAB are appointed by the Minister responsible for the Act. Members are appointed based on their leadership, experience, knowledge and expertise in the alcohol and other drugs sector. Members are independent and do not represent specific organisations or professions.

The AODAB's collective expertise contributes to ensuring decision-making at the Commission is informed by contemporary and expert advice, including decisions related to strategy and policy development and systems and services planning.

**To ensure the advice provided is considerate of diverse perspectives, membership includes expertise in the following areas:**

- Community sector and regional services
- Aboriginal sector
- Multicultural sector
- Prevention
- Youth, older adult and people experiencing disability
- Law enforcement
- Addiction Psychiatrists and/or Addiction Medicine Specialists
- Public health and policy
- Academia and research
- Lived and Living Experience (consumer, parent/carer and significant other)

# Overview by the Chairperson

**The AODAB welcomed the State Government’s commitment to increasing the focus on alcohol and other drugs following the 2022 Independent Review into Health System Governance, including the establishment of the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs in July 2024. The Director, Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs has been regularly attending meetings during this period as an observer and facilitating a closer engagement between the AODAB and Commission.**

Furthermore, Government’s endorsement to expand the expertise available to the AODAB through its members was significant. It recognised the diverse stakeholders involved in effective prevention and other responses to alcohol and other drug-related harm. This action broadens the range of expertise and strengthens the AODAB’s capacity to provide high-quality, evidence-informed guidance to the Commissioner and the Commission, helping to drive policy and services reform

Looking forward, the AODAB is now developing its work plan aligned to current priorities, ensuring its efforts are responsive to, and impactful on, changing needs across our communities. The work plan will be used to shape meeting agenda and, advice to the Commissioner which will support system transformation aligned to key focus areas of the Western Australian Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030. The AODAB will also continue to be responsive, working with the flexibility required to advise on new and emerging issues.

# Membership

The AODAB membership for 2024-2025 was as follows:

Position	Member's name	Period of membership for this reporting period	Tenure
<b>Chairperson</b>	Emeritus Professor Steve Allsop	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 September 2022 – 30 August 2025: 3 years
<b>Deputy Chairperson</b>	Ms Julia Stafford	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 January 2022 – 31 December 2024: 3 years 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2027: 3 years
<b>Member</b>	Ms Miriam Rudd	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 January 2022 – 31 December 2024: 3 years 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2027: 3 years
<b>Member</b>	Ms Nafiso Mohamed	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	8 April 2024 – 7 April 2027: 3 years
<b>Member</b>	Commander Lawrence Panaia	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	27 January 2023 – 26 January 2026: 3 years
<b>Member</b>	Mr Ethan James	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	26 January 2023 – 25 January 2026: 3 years

# Member profiles



## Chairperson Emeritus Professor Steve Allsop

Steve has been involved in alcohol and other drug prevention, treatment, policy research and practice, and service management for over 40 years. He has worked across services, government, and academic positions. In recent years he has worked extensively in community and national prevention initiatives. He has been the Director of two Australian national drug research centres, the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction and the National Drug Research Institute. He also worked with the Western Australian Government Drug and Alcohol Office for many years. He is currently an Emeritus Professor at the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, Board Director at the Australian Drug Foundation, a member of the National Suicide Prevention Office Advisory Board, a member of Relationships Australia (WA) Board and a member of the UK Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs Prevention Sub-Committee.



## Deputy Chair Julia Stafford

Julia's career to date has combined academic research and policy advocacy in the public health field, with a focus on alcohol harm prevention. She is currently the Alcohol Program Manager at Cancer Council WA, with associated roles including deputy chair of the Cancer Council nutrition, alcohol and physical activity committee and deputy chair of Alcohol Change Australia. Julia is an active member of the Public Health Association of Australia via the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Special Interest Group. Julia is also a member of the Mental Health, Wellbeing and Alcohol and Other Drugs Ministerial Advisory Panel. Julia is also a PhD Candidate enrolled with the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University and her research investigates the roles of vested interests in alcohol policy development processes in Australia. Julia previously held roles within Curtin University (2007-2020) with a focus on alcohol harm prevention and public health advocacy.



**Member**  
**Miriam Rudd**

Having experienced the last 20 years of a loved one living with drug and alcohol addiction, Miriam is a passionate representative of her experiences as a parent. During her six years on the AODAB Miriam brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding from the family and carers perspective.

For eight years, Miriam has been involved with the Parent and Family Drug Support Line in Perth listening, supporting, and talking to other parents about their loved one's drug and alcohol issues as well as working in the Drug Court talking to family members of participants. Miriam has a diploma in counselling and has completed many short- and long-term courses regarding learning more about drug addiction. Miriam has close personal experience of the consequences of drug taking including through the hospital, mental health and justice systems.



**Member**  
**Commander**  
**Lawrence Panaia APM**

Since joining the Western Australia Police Force and graduating from the Police Academy in 1986, Lawrence has served in various operational roles in Metro, Regional Western Australia, and State Crime portfolios. His current role includes oversight of Licensing Enforcement Division which includes the Alcohol and Drug Policy Unit focusing on harm minimisation. Lawrence has also been involved in many other community causes including six years as Chairman of Western Australia Police Legacy, previous board member of Police and Community Youth Centres, and currently serving on the Constable Care Safety Foundation Board.



**Member**  
**Ethan James**

Ethan has worked in the alcohol and other drug sector since 2016. In his current role with an alcohol and other drug service provider, he is responsible for quality, compliance, communications, and strategic projects. He is also on the management committee for an alcohol and other drugs representative organisation.

Previously, Ethan delivered sector advocacy representation and support for practice expertise in policy, planning and commissioning. Previous projects have included supporting sector workforce planning and development.

Ethan has a passion for quality service delivery and practical solutions that seek to enhance the sector's operating environment. He has a background in policy, program development and contracting across multiple sectors and state/federal government portfolios.



**Member**  
**Nafiso Mohamed**

Nafiso Mohamed is a policy professional passionate about equity, inclusion, and service accessibility. As an AODAB member, she provides strategic advice to ensure culturally responsive and inclusive policies.

Nafiso works in employment policy, shaping frameworks that enhance service delivery and performance outcomes. She is dedicated to ensuring policies reflect the needs of diverse communities and advocates for a person-centred approach in mental health and alcohol and other drug services.

Nafiso's experience spans international policy and research, including work with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Jordan, and social policy research at the University of Jordan. These roles have reinforced Nafiso's commitment to bridging the gap between policy development and the lived experiences of diverse communities.

# Overview of the year

**Throughout the year, the AODAB has made significant progress in strengthening its governance, enhancing collaboration, and deepening its understanding of contemporary key alcohol and other drug issues impacting the Western Australian community.**

The AODAB met approximately every two months, consistent with the requirements set out in the Terms of Reference.

Meetings were held on the following dates:

- 7 August 2024
- 25 September 2024
- 11 December 2024
- 26 February 2025
- 9 April 2025
- 11 June 2025

Meetings ran for a duration of three hours on each occasion. Significant work also occurs out of session.

The AODAB is committed to communicating information about its work and the advice provided to the Commissioner. Following each meeting, communiques are published on the Commission website, providing an overview of key matters discussed.

## Updated Terms of Reference

In October 2024, the Terms of Reference for the AODAB were updated and formally endorsed by the Minister for Health; Mental Health. The revised Terms of Reference have incorporated contemporary terminology, reflected the updated governance structure for the mental health and alcohol and other drugs systems and expanded the AODAB membership allowing for broader representation and expertise.

## Member recruitment

The Government endorsed an expansion of AODAB membership from eight to eleven members in October 2024. During this reporting period, recruitment processes were progressed for the appointment of five new members in the following fields:

- Lived and living experience – consumer
- Regional services
- Aboriginal sector
- Addiction Psychiatrist/Addiction Medicine Specialist

## Collaboration and strategic engagement

The AODAB has continued to provide advice to the Commission, including the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs. The Director of the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs regularly attended AODAB meetings as an observer and provided updates on key initiatives and facilitated collaborative information sharing.

## Knowledge building and expert engagement

To support informed decision-making and identification of emerging priorities, throughout the year the AODAB welcomed several guest experts from Western Australia and other jurisdictions throughout the year. Where possible, presentations were open to relevant areas of the Commission to support intra-agency knowledge building and collaboration.

These sessions provided valuable insights into current trends, challenges and innovations in the alcohol and other drugs sector. Presentations included:

- **Emerging Drug Network of Australia**, Dr Jessamine Soderstrom, Royal Perth Hospital
- **Stigma and Discrimination in Alcohol and Other Drugs Services**, Jill Rundle, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Charli Peasley, Strategic Advocacy Coordinator, WA Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies
- **Alcohol and Other Drugs Related Priorities**, Colin Smith, CEO and Carina Tan-Van Baren, Executive Director, Healthway
- **Early Warning Systems**, Professor Paul Griffiths, Director, National Drug Research Institute, Curtin
- **WA Model for Violence Prevention Pilot**, Anna Lawrence, Manager, Prevention Planning and Development, Commission
- **Outcomes Measurement Framework**, Dr Nicole Hill, Assistant Director, System-Wide Performance, Commission
- **Alcohol and Other Drugs Governance Implementation Plan**, Tahnee McCausland, Acting Assistant Director, Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs
- **Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025–2030**, Kelly Kennington, Director, Strategic Policy and Planning, Commission
- **Alcohol and Drug Support Service and the Parent and Family Drug Support Program**, Naina Qureshi, Manager, Parent and Family Drug Support, Alcohol and Drug Support Service
- **Evidence-Informed Decision Making**, Professor Mike Daube, Independent Presenter
- **A Digital Health Approach to Alcohol and Other Drugs Service Delivery**, Dr Anthony Gill, Clinical Director, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service, New South Wales Health, Professor Nadine Ezard, Clinical Director, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service, St Vincent's Hospital, and Stephanie Hocking, Director, Alcohol and Other Drugs Virtual Care Hubs, New South Wales Ministry of Health

## Key issues and advice

In this reporting period, the AODAB has provided advice to the Commissioner on:

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities' (CaLD) access to alcohol and other drugs services**

The AODAB discussed how CaLD communities access alcohol and other drug services in Western Australia and other jurisdictions, and opportunities to reduce barriers. The AODAB provided advice for consideration to the Commission's Multicultural Action Plan.

### **Provision of virtual care for alcohol and other drugs services**

The AODAB continues to focus on strategies that might improve and expand access to effective alcohol and other drug treatment in regional areas. Central to this is the importance of developing a seamless, connected network of services across the State. This includes exploring opportunities to integrate digital platforms that enhance reach, reduce geographic barriers, and ensure more consistent availability of care.

The AODAB considered emerging issues and evidence around virtual care practice, including lessons from initiatives occurring in New South Wales that may be translatable to the Western Australian environment and recognised this as a key important development for the state.

### **Reducing stigma and discrimination**

The AODAB considers preventing and reducing alcohol and other drug stigma and discrimination to be a key action area that is critical in a range of State Government strategic priorities. The effects of stigma and discrimination are far reaching for individuals, families and communities and impact help seeking and mental health and wellbeing. Detailed advice has been provided to the Commissioner to inform the development of a strategic approach to reducing stigma and discrimination, including within the development of key strategy and policy documents. The AODAB recognises this as a key issue that will require a range of enduring responses over time.

### **Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy 2025-2030**

The AODAB provided feedback to the statewide public consultation process to inform the development of this important statewide framework.

### **Early warning systems in Western Australia**

Following a presentation from Professor Paul Griffiths, Director, National Drug Research Institute, Curtin, Members recognised emerging drug trends increasing the risk of harm across Australia, including highly unpredictable and toxic new psychoactive substances. There is a recognition that early warning systems need to be coupled with rapid responses. Members noted the pertinent lessons from other jurisdictions of effective initiatives for Western Australia and encouraged the Commission to review the potential of those lessons. This will be an ongoing activity in the coming year.

### **Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs**

The AODAB supported the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs by offering expert, independent advice informed by the diverse knowledge and experience of its members. Through their strong understanding of the alcohol and other drugs sector, emerging issues, community needs, and system challenges, the AODAB provided insight to inform strategic priorities.

### **Evidence informed decision making**

Following a presentation delivered by Emeritus Professor Mike Daube, the AODAB considered the importance of strengthening public policy processes in contexts where vested commercial interests may be present. Drawing on the diverse expertise within its membership, the AODAB highlighted the importance of evidence-informed decision making and emphasised the need to ensure public health considerations remain central in policy development.

# Looking forward to 2025-2026

**Building on the achievements of the past year, the AODAB will continue to strengthen its role in providing independent, evidence-informed advice to the Commissioner.**

The year ahead will focus on consolidating membership, developing a structured annual work plan, contributing guidance that supports the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs in its mandate to elevate alcohol and other drugs in the health and mental health systems and development of key strategic frameworks. The AODAB will continue to provide advice to the Commission to support the delivery on the priorities outlined in the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030.

## **Consolidating membership**

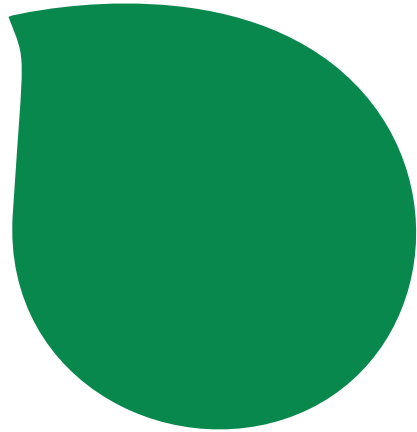
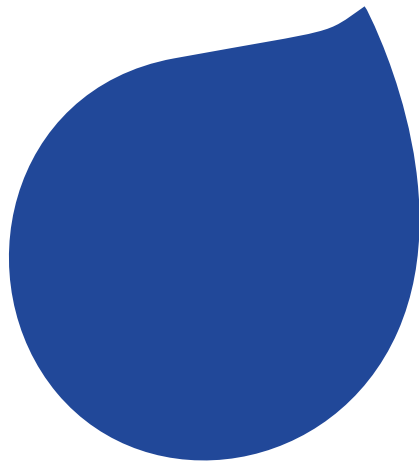
Using the full membership, the AODAB will identify priority areas where its collective expertise can have the greatest impact, ensuring that advice provided to the Commissioner is timely, relevant, and practical.

## **Workplan**

A new work plan will be developed to guide the AODAB's activities and ensure a focused, coordinated approach to its advisory role. The work plan will align with the priorities outlined in the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030 while maintaining flexibility to respond to new and emerging issues.

## **Support the Commission to deliver on alcohol and other drug related strategic priorities**

Drawing on its diverse expertise, including lived and living experience perspectives, the AODAB will play an important role in informing implementation of the alcohol and other drug related strategic directions and aspirations set out in the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030. Through the aligned workplan, AODAB will also be supporting the development of strategic frameworks that guide coordinated action across government and other partners to prevent and reduce harm from alcohol and other drugs.



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