

Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Qld Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (QNADA)
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Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee
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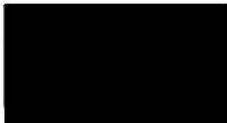
Dear Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2024. The Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drugs (QNADA) submission is attached.

QNADA represents a dynamic and broad-reaching specialist network of non-government alcohol and other drug (NGO AOD) treatment and harm reduction services across Queensland. We have over 55 member organisations, representing the majority of specialist NGO AOD providers. This submission is made following consultation with QNADA members.

QNADA is pleased to provide further information, or discuss any aspect of this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or by calling [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Lang

CEO



Submission to the
Queensland Respect at Work
and Other Matters
Amendment Bill 2024

July 2024

This submission has been prepared by the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (QNADA). Its content is informed by consultation with QNADA member organisations providing alcohol and other drug treatment and harm reduction services across Queensland, as well as a review of relevant research and reports.

QNADA supports the implementation of the reforms to Queensland's anti-discrimination laws, and reforms contained in the Respect@work¹ report and Queensland Human Rights Commission's Building Belonging² report. We welcome the recognition of the need to continue to shift towards a more proactive, preventative system which aims to address systemic discrimination and inequality, including those experienced by people who use drugs. QNADA is particularly supportive of the draft Bill's proposed amendments to:

- Implement the expanded and updated protected attributes by the Anti-Discrimination Act, specifically the irrelevant criminal record and irrelevant medical record attributes.
- Introducing a broad positive duty on all organisations with obligations under the Act (including businesses, the government and non-profit organisations), to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination
- Expansion of monitoring compliance and complaints processes, including representative complaints and expanding timeframe to make a complaint.

We note the vast majority of people who use alcohol and other drugs do not experience problematic use and never come into contact with any services for reasons related to their use. This includes specialist health services like alcohol and other drug treatment and harm reduction services, as well as agencies like police, courts, child safety or youth justice. However, experiences of stigma and discrimination are common for people who use drugs in Queensland which occurs across a range of settings including employment.

The new attribute of irrelevant criminal record is a step forward in anti-discrimination reforms. We note that our members report current Blue Card (Working With Children Check) regulations mean that it is incredibly difficult to obtain a Blue Card, particularly for people with lived and living experience, which hampers the development of an AOD peer workforce.

Our 2019 [Policy position paper](#) discusses the stigma and discrimination faced by people who use drugs in more detail, and calls for person first language to be adopted across services; improved media reporting; and the implementation of a range of reform options to address this issue.

The Queensland Mental Health Commission's *Changing attitudes, Changing lives*³ (2018) paper found that experiences of stigma and discrimination were common among people with a lived experience of problematic alcohol and other drug use and that it created barriers in seeking help, compounded social disadvantage, led to social isolation, and detrimentally affected a persons' mental and physical health. These issues were also discussed in a follow-up paper *Don't Judge, And Listen*⁴ which explored the impact of stigma and discrimination related to problematic alcohol and other drug use for

¹ Australians Human Rights Commission (2020) Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces

² Building belonging: Review of Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, July 2022

³ Queensland Mental Health Commission (2018) Changing attitudes, Changing lives: options to reduce stigma and discrimination for people experiencing alcohol and other drug use.

⁴ Queensland Mental Health Commission (2020). Don't Judge, and Listen: *Experiences of stigma and discrimination related to problematic alcohol and other drug use*'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and individuals living in Queensland. This report found that research participants experienced multiple forms of stigma and discrimination related to race, clan, location and alcohol and other drug use. This acted to intensify their experiences of stigma and discrimination, with multiple barriers to accessing services identified.

These reports identified a number of options to reduce stigma and discrimination for people experiencing problematic alcohol and other drug use, including emphasising the importance of:

- ensuring that support is available for people in the workplace who are experiencing problematic substance use, including flexible workplace policies and assistance for employers.
- approaches that focus on social inclusion, including by building the capacity of social sector workforces to recognise and reduce stigma and discrimination, and focusing on evidence-based community information and mass media campaigns