

MEDIA RELEASE

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HRA WELCOMES INAUGURAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) is excited to announce the commencement this week of the organisation's first Executive Director - Annie Madden AO.

Annie is a Co-Founder of HRA and current Board member and is highly regarded in the Australian and global drug policy context. She has decades of experience in high level drug policy advocacy, providing frontline harm reduction programs and services and in representing people who use drugs in Australia. Annie was awarded an Order of Australia in 2019 for her drug policy advocacy work and her services to the Australian community. From 2000 - 2016 she was the CEO of the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and has just recently completed a PhD at UNSW focused on drug policy issues.

"I am thrilled to be able to take up this new and exciting role for HRA and my track-record speaks for itself. I have dedicated my entire professional life to advocating for harm reduction, drug policy reform and the rights and dignity of people who use drugs. I know first-hand what it was like before harm reduction policies and programs were introduced in Australia, and I've seen the devastation in countries that have refused to implement these approaches. Harm reduction is precious – it saves lives, simple as that" Ms Madden said.

Madden continued *"Unfortunately, harm reduction continues to be vulnerable to funding cuts and politics and, we only need to look around us to see that drug policy reform is more urgent than it has ever been. In this context, being appointed as the first Executive Director of HRA is not just exciting, it is a genuine privilege and, in many ways, the perfect role for a passionate and experienced advocate like me."*

HRA commenced in 2015 and has continued to go from strength to strength over the past six years. One of Annie's main priorities in her new role will be to build and further strengthen the capacity and visibility of the organisation as an influential and respected voice on harm reduction and to lead the way on drug policy reform in Australia.

HRA President & Co-Founder, Gino Vumbaca OAM stated *"Many people will find it hard to believe that since its inception, HRA has operated without any paid staff nor any funding other than donations and membership fees. Despite the limited resources available, the extraordinary commitment of the Board, volunteers and colleagues has meant that HRA has been able to lead on issues such as pill testing, treatment equity, cannabis reform and advocacy on a range of drug policy issues. The appointment of Annie as our first Executive Director marks an important milestone for HRA as it means we not only have someone to lead many of our current and new initiatives but someone who is internationally respected and fittingly regarded as having exceptional expertise and experience in the field of harm reduction and drug policy. It is a fantastic day for HRA."*

Annie Madden works as the HRA Executive Director Mon & Thurs each week and can be contacted at email: executivedirector@harmreductionaustralia.org.au and 0414628136