

## Who is the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League?

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The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) is the national peak organisation representing the state and territory drug user organisations and issues of national significance for people who use or have used illicit drugs. AIVL is a peer-based organisation, which means that it is run by and for people who use or have used illicit drugs.

## Who are the Members of AIVL?

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As a peak body, AIVL does not accept individuals as members but rather has a membership made up of a national network of peer-based organisations and programs. The members of AIVL are the state and territory peer-based drug user organisations, which ensures that the organisation truly represents a national perspective on the issues for people who use or have used illicit drugs. AIVL's current member organisations are:

- **NSW** - NSW Users & AIDS Association (NUAA)
- **ACT** - Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA) incl. The Connection
- **VIC** - Harm Reduction Victoria (HRVIC)
- **SA** - South Australian Voice for Intravenous Education (SAVIVE)
- **WA** - Western Australian Substance Users Association (WASUA)
- **QLD** - Queensland Injectors Health Network (QUIHN)  
Queensland Intravenous AIDS Association (QuIVAA)
- **TAS** - TASCAHRD and working with informal networks (previous membership through TUHSL & NUSERS)

AIVL always remains open to new membership applications from suitable groups who meet the membership criteria. AIVL currently has three levels of membership including:

- Formally constituted peer-based drug user organisations;
- Informal Networks of people who use or have used illicit drugs;
- Auspiced peer-run projects/programs of another NGO.

Each level of membership has specific membership criteria.

The state and territory member organisations of AIVL are also peer-oriented, membership based organisations. Their members include individuals who use or have used illicit drugs, families and friends of people who use or have used and people who support their organisational aims and objectives.

## A Brief History of AIVL

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For much of its history, AIVL operated as an unfunded national network and peak organisation. Although the organisation formed in the late 1980's, it was 1992 when AIVL became a formally constituted, incorporated association.

From the late 1980's to 1998, AIVL functioned as an unfunded national organisation with the exception of occasional one-off project grants. Despite the lack of funding, AIVL developed into a strong, effective and accountable organisation.

In March 1998, AIVL received its first significant government funding for a two-year National Hepatitis C Education & Prevention Program for People Who Inject Illicit Drugs. The effectiveness and success of this program resulted in the organisation receiving additional funding for a National Hepatitis C Policy Program in late 1999. AIVL's Hepatitis C Education and Policy/Treatments Programs continue to be funded on a two year funding cycle.

Significant government funding for hepatitis C related activities also allowed AIVL to establish an office and employ permanent staff members for the first time in the organisation's history. AIVL maintains an office in Canberra and currently has a staff team comprising of 12 people and auspices the ACT drug users organisation, CAHMA.

## AIVL's Organisational Philosophy

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AIVL operates on a peer-based, user-centred philosophy, which means the organisation encourages and supports people who use or have used illicit drugs to speak on their own behalf and to participate directly in all levels of the organisation.

AIVL also promotes the health and human rights of people who use or have used illicit drugs. The organisation believes people who use or have used illicit drugs should be treated with dignity and respect both as human beings and as consumers of health and social services.

## AIVL's Organisational Structure

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As an incorporated, membership-based non-government organisation, AIVL is governed by an elected, national executive committee. The AIVL Executive Committee is elected from the AIVL membership on an annual basis at the AIVL Annual General Meeting.

The AIVL AGM is attended by two delegates from each state and territory, members of the AIVL Executive Committee and the staff of the AIVL office. Other 'observers' from member organisations can attend the AIVL AGM upon request.

The AIVL office and the funded programs of the organisation are managed on a day-to-day level by the AIVL Executive Officer. There are Program Managers for each of the major program or activity areas. The Program staff regularly consult with and involve the AIVL membership in the implementation of all program activities.

## How is AIVL Funded?

### **Hepatitis C Activities:**

AIVL currently receives the majority of its funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, BBVS Section to provide a range of national hepatitis C related activities.

Some of the key activities undertaken by the AIVL Hepatitis C Program include:

- developing peer education resources and campaigns focused on hepatitis C prevention and treatment and other harm reduction information;
- providing training for peer educators;
- researching key issues affecting highly marginalised groups of illicit drug users and developing targeted peer education responses;
- disseminating the latest hepatitis C education information and research to AIVL members and other service providers;
- providing web-based information and policy responses on hepatitis C and related issues;
- representing the perspective of people who use illicit drugs at national conferences, committees, forums and workshops.
- representing the 'voice' of people who use or have used illicit drugs at the national level.
- developing policy statements and discussion papers on key issues for people who use or have used illicit drugs;
- initiating peer-driven research on hepatitis C related policy issues;
- developing media responses on key policy issues;
- providing information to federal politicians and their advisors on the hepatitis C and drug related policy issues;
- developing strategic alliances and partnerships with other relevant national organisations.

### **Drug Policy Activities:**

In 2005 AIVL commenced the National Treatment Service Users (TSU) Project: Phase One, a research project on consumer participation in drug treatment services. The final report is available on the AIVL website. In 2007, AIVL commenced TSU: Phase Two which is focused on conducting five consumer participation demonstration projects in drug treatment settings in 3 states across Australia. The final report from TSU: Phase Two will be available early in 2010.

In 2008 AIVL commenced a landmark project designed to document the contribution that drug user organisations and drug user representatives have made to Australian drug policy over the past 20 years. The "Trackmarks" Project is funded under the Drug Policy Modelling Program, UNSW and will include an online policy archive and timeline of Australian user organisations and a national consultation report. "Trackmarks" online will be available in late 2009.

AIVL also publishes a bi-annual magazine "Junkmail" which aims to inform and entertain as well as provide a 'voice' and forum for drug users on the issues that affect them in their daily lives. Back issues of "Junkmail" are available at: [www.aivl.org.au](http://www.aivl.org.au)

### **Regional Activities:**

In 2008, AIVL received funding through AusAID for our first program of work in the Asia region. The AIVL Regional Partnerships Project aims to develop and maintain partnerships with peer-based drug user organisations in Asia to support effective regional responses to HIV among people who inject drugs. This is a 3 year program of activities until June 2011.

### **Unfunded Activities:**

Throughout its history, AIVL has continued to undertake unfunded activities on the full range of issues that affect people who inject and those on pharmacotherapy programs. Current unfunded activities include a new discussion paper on issues for Older Opioid Injectors and a forthcoming discussion paper on the need for pharmacotherapy reform including the introduction of injectable pharmacotherapies in Australia. Contact AIVL for more information on these or any AIVL projects.

### Contact AIVL

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