Public health: governments abrogating their responsibilities

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The broad role of the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), as the national peak body for the non-government sector, brings with it an overview of the state of public health and social welfare programs that may be lacking in organisations focusing more on single issues. Several changes of government have occurred in the past two years at state and territory level. With these new administrations has come a pronounced move away from public health commitments, with many programs suffering under the guise—particularly in rural and remote Australia—of ‘belt tightening’. This presentation will observe how NGOs attempt to maintain a level of support for the areas of society they support as governments cut programs and projects—apparently with little thought of the consequences of their actions. The effect this is having among those least able to articulate their position is a major concern, which raises the question whether governments are abandoning the concept of social responsibilities.