



ST VINCENT'S  
HOSPITAL  
MELBOURNE

# The Severe Substance Disorder Treatment Act (SSDTA)

The what, how, who, where and the nitty gritty

# Acknowledgement of country and the impacts of involuntary detention on Australian's First Peoples

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We acknowledge the Ancestors, Elders and Families of the Kulin Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet. We acknowledge that this land is a place of age-old Ceremony, Celebration, and Initiation. We recognize that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's living culture has a unique role in the life of this region.

As we share our own knowledge practices within St. Vincent's Hospital, we pay respect to the deep knowledge embedded within the Community of the Wurundjeri People, their Relationship to Country and the Spiritual Connection to the Land. We commit to working respectfully in honoring and learning from the ongoing connection to traditions, culture, and country.

We also acknowledge the historical and ongoing generational traumas and subsequent impacts of involuntary detention on Australia's first peoples.

# The SSDTA

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People who are subjected to a detention and treatment order can be detained in a treatment centre and treated involuntarily for up to 14 days.

"Detention and treatment is aimed at providing a critical intervention that will help bring the person back from the brink... and [offer them] a chance to recover their capacity... think more clearly about their situation and the opportunity to engage in voluntary treatment"

# SSDTA: The What

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**01**

**Detention for severe substance use**

The Act is for people whose severe substance use places them at serious risk of death or their health is at serious risk of damage

**02**

**People cannot make sound decisions**

People under the Act are deemed to be unable to make sound decisions about their health, wellbeing and general safety

**03**

**It is a matter of urgency**

Immediate treatment is assessed to be a matter of urgency given that the person's life is at imminent risk from their substance use

**04**

**Can only be treated as an inpatient**

The person needs to have exhausted other less restrictive treatment modalities for the SSDTA to be deemed necessary

# SSDTA: The Where

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People who are placed under the SSDTA, are transported to the St. Vincent's Public Hospital's, Emergency Department. They are either transported there via their supports or via emergency services such as Victoria Police. If Victoria Police are called to transport a person under the SSDTA, the applicant will need to be present as well.

When they arrive at the emergency department, the person's physical, and psychological health is assessed which then determines whether they stay on a hospital ward or get transported to De Paul House for treatment.

# SSDTA: The How



The person will be transported to St. Vincent's Hospital and will be treated for up to 14 days. The person is reviewed daily and they have the opportunity to become a voluntary consumer



**5 - Treatment at SVH**

The matter has to be heard within 72 hours of filing an application. If approved, provide the SSDTAC with the certified extract



**4 - Court**

Complete relevant paperwork in conjunction with the SSDTA team and file an application to a Magistrate's Court



**3 - Paperwork**

SSDTAC will consult with the team regarding the person's case. PMP to consult with SSDTA doctor



**2 - Consultation**

Email the SSDTA coordinator (SSDTAC) and complete an enquiry form



**1 - Enquiry**

# SSDTA: The Nitty Gritty

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The Act is not targeted at people who are capable of making choices about their substance use, including refusing treatment. Nor does it replace the Victorian Mental Health Act.

**01**

The SSDTA is applied on a case by case basis as everyone's situation, and substance use profile is unique.

**02**

A panel of Addiction Medicine Consultants at DoAM decide on a person's SSDTA eligibility. Their decision is based on immediate risk, a person's medico-psycho-social situation and their cognitive functioning.

**03**

Anyone is allowed to seek secondary consultation, advice and clarity regarding a person's eligibility for the SSDTA via the SSDTA coordinator

**04**

Any community member over 18 years old can apply for the SSDTA. This includes loved ones of people with a severe substance disorder, workers in various service sectors, and medical staff.

# SSDTA: The Nitty Gritty Continued

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Prescribed medical practitioners (PMPs) who can make a recommendation for the Act include: Addiction Medicine Specialists, consultant Psychiatrists, and Justice Department appointed Medical Practitioners.

**01**

The SSDTA coordinator works with the applicant, and the potential person on the Act, before, during and up to 6 months after the implementation of the Act.

**02**

The SSDTA coordinator's role for 6 months after the Act, is to sustainably link the person in with existing services/sectors and support these referral pathways.

**03**

Whilst on the Act, the person is reviewed every 24 hours by the senior clinician and other St. Vincent's Department of Addiction Medicine staff.

**04**

Upon review by the senior clinician and if deemed appropriate, the Act can be revoked prior to the completion of the 14 days. The person can then either continue treatment on a voluntarily basis or leave the treating facility.



# Contact us

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If you would like to find out more about The SSDTA, the Coordinator can be contacted the following ways:

Email: [mishma.kumar@svha.org.au](mailto:mishma.kumar@svha.org.au)

Mobile: 0478 956 452

We are open for enquiries, secondary consultations, and referrals.