



Meegan Fitzharris MLA

Minister for Health and Wellbeing
Minister for Higher Education
Minister for Medical and Health Research
Minister for Transport
Minister for Vocational Education and Skills

Member for Yerrabi

11 December 2018

New ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan released

Harm minimisation underpins the ACT Government's new [ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021](#), which outlines the priorities over the next three years to tackle the harms from alcohol, tobacco and other drug use in the ACT.

Minister for Health and Wellbeing Meegan Fitzharris said the Action Plan demonstrates the ACT is leading the nation in many key areas, including continuing to support pill testing and looking at new ways to deal with an increase in opioid harms.

"The new ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan released today outlines 43 key actions that the Government will prioritise over the next three years to tackle alcohol, tobacco and other drug harms in the ACT," Minister Fitzharris said.

"The Action Plan takes a harm minimisation approach focussed on three key areas – demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction – and is closely aligned with the [National Drug Strategy](#)."

Some of the key outcomes of the Action Plan include:

- Collaborating with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and services to consider AOD priorities including residential rehabilitation services;
- Examining further opportunities to expand pill testing at events in the ACT;
- Exploring the feasibility of establishing a medically supervised injecting facility; and
- Publishing an annual progress report that will include a snapshot of alcohol, tobacco and drug use in the ACT.

Minister Fitzharris said the Action Plan prioritises screening, testing, treatment, and harm reduction, with evidence-based responses to drug use.

"Every year there are over 1,000 admissions to our hospitals from overdoses.

"These overdoses are the result of alcohol consumption as well as the use of other drugs such as heroin, methamphetamines and pharmaceutical opioids.

“We know that the effects of drug use can be devastating, not only for those who use drugs, but also for their friends and family and the broader community.

“That’s why harm reduction is a key element of this Action Plan, and this is demonstrated by the support for pill testing.

Minister Fitzharris said the Action Plan also focuses on emerging drug-related issues, with the government committed increasing access to treatment options.

“We are focused on addressing the harm we are seeing from an increasing use and misuse of opioids, both illicit and prescription – a trend that is being seen nationally and internationally. We will look at ways to address this trend such as increasing access to naloxone in the community.

“It’s also concerning to see opioid deaths on the rise. That’s why we will look to explore the feasibility and need for a medically supervised injecting room here in Canberra, which is something that has been established in other cities already.”

The Action Plan also has a focus on better partnerships, coordination and collaboration across the AOD sector, with law enforcement and working more closely with priority populations.

“The ACT Government invests more than \$20 million each year in alcohol and other drug treatment and associated support services.

“Partnerships between government agencies and non-government organisations are increasingly important as we work to improve treatment, tackle crime and expand support services.

“Reducing the wide range of alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms requires collaboration across multiple agencies and community sectors.

“To build on the extensive consultation that has occurred in developing this Action Plan, a new ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan Advisory Group is being established.

“The Advisory Group will play a critical role in identifying emerging drug use patterns and informing implementation and future priority actions.

“It will have representation from government, peak bodies, service providers, consumers and priority population groups and will work with the ACT Health Directorate to develop an evaluation and monitoring framework to measure progress in meeting the Action Plan’s objectives.

“This Action Plan has had a lot of input from stakeholders and the community over the past year, and I thank everyone for their involvement in this important piece of work,” said Minister Fitzharris.

The ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan was welcomed by the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) today.

“ATODA welcomes the release of the new ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan which will provide an essential framework for reducing reduce related harms in Canberra,” said

“ATODA strongly supports the plan’s central commitments to: people and families who experience the greatest burden of harms; evidence; partnerships and governance to ensure that actions are prioritised to meet the Canberra community’s needs.

“ATODA looks forward to being part of the evaluation, implementation and further refinement of the Plan.

For a copy of the Action Plan and for further information, visit the ACT Health website at:

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/act-drug-strategy-action-plan>

Statement ends

Media contact/s:

Claire Johnston T (02) 6205 0022 M 0452 597 459 ClaireV.johnston@act.gov.au

ACT Legislative Assembly

Phone (02) 6205 0051 Email: fitzharris@act.gov.au

 [@MeeganFitzMLA](https://twitter.com/MeeganFitzMLA)  [MeeganFitzharrisMLA](https://www.facebook.com/MeeganFitzharrisMLA)

