



atoda annual report

2020-2021



About ATODA

The Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) is the peak body for the alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Our purpose is to lead and influence positive outcomes in policy, practice and research. We do this by providing collaborative leadership on the social determinants of harmful drug use; societal responses to drug use; and societal responses to people who use drugs.

We provide expertise in the areas of policy; sector workforce development and capacity building; research, data and evaluation; health services planning; coordination and partnerships; training and education; communication; information and resources.

Our vision is a healthy, well and safe ACT community with the lowest possible levels of alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms. Underpinning our work is a commitment to health equity, the social and cultural determinants of health, and the values of collaboration, participation, diversity, human rights, social justice and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

We work for better interaction and integration between alcohol, tobacco and other drug researchers, services, policy workers, practitioners, consumers and their friends and families in the ACT and region.

Documents accompanying this annual report

ATODA's 2020-2021 annual report should be read in conjunction with accompanying documents including the:

- [Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#)
- [Financial Statements 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021](#)

ATODA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands of the ACT and region and pays its respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Reporting on the Strategic Plan 2020–2023	4
Chair’s Report	5
Chief Executive Officer’s Report.....	6
Our Board and Staff.....	7
Staff.....	7
Acknowledgements	8
Full, Associate and Individual Members.....	8
Funders and Supporters.....	8
Consultants, IT, Legal, Graphic Design and Finance Support and Training Providers	9
Other Partners and Collaborators	9
a. Promote non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory language, policies, practice and research	10
1. Galvanised a response from the AOD sector and allies (locally, nationally and internationally) to the Inquiry into the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021	10
2. Delivered ATOD and harm reduction training	10
3. Produced and distributed the ACT ATOD Sector eBulletin	11
4. Produced and distributed the ATODA Research eBulletin	11
5. Provided a central point for information	12
6. Supported the University Drug and Alcohol Network	12
7. Collaborated with several research organisations.....	12
8. Engaged with the media, including directly and by promoting the voices of allies	13
b. Develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce	14
1. Facilitated training under the ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Qualifications Strategy ..	14
2. Delivered the Safer Families: Specialist Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Project.	14
3. Convened the ACT ATOD Workers Group	15
c. Develop and maintain the capacity of the sector	16
1. Influenced the development of the ACT Government’s approach to commissioning.	16
2. Influenced the ACT Government’s development of the Territory-wide Health Services Plan and AOD Services Plan.....	16
3. Made a submission to the 2021–2022 Budget.....	16
4. Coordinated and administered the ACT Government’s sector stimulus funding.....	16
5. Maintained the ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services Online Directory....	17
6. Convened the ACT Specialist ATOD Executives Group	18
7. Administered the We CAN (nicotine replacement therapy) Program.....	18
8. Convened the ACT ATOD Workers Group	19
d. Strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations	20
1. Actively participated in the NGO Leadership Group.....	20

2.	Promulgated results of the SUSOS via publication and a series of presentations.....	20
3.	Secured funding to enhance the SUSOS by enhancing stakeholder perspectives in survey design in collaboration with the sector and service users	21
4.	Assisted the Capital Health Network with needs assessment activities	21
5.	Developed and distributed the Workforce Profile Questionnaire	21
6.	Supported the University Drug and Alcohol Network	22
7.	Participated in research with other AOD Peaks—The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the non-government alcohol and other drug sector.....	22
e. Strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise		23
1.	Reinvigorated relations with the ACT Government Health Directorate.....	23
2.	Provided advocacy regarding the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List	23
3.	Engaged with other state and territory AOD peaks	23
4.	Maintained the ACT electronic Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ACT eASSIST)	24
5.	Contributed to ACT and national coordination mechanisms.....	24
6.	Published, promoted and secured additional funding for the SUSOS	24
7.	Engaged with inquiries in the ACT Legislative Assembly and elsewhere	24
f. Maintain and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the ACT alcohol tobacco and other drug peak body		25
1.	Maintained a surplus over the financial year.....	25
2.	Sought and secured new funding	25

Introduction

Reporting on the Strategic Plan 2020–2023

ATODA's fourth strategic plan outlines the vision, values, purpose, strategic priorities and outcomes for the organisation from 2020–2023. In this annual report, activities are organised by the relationship to the strategic priorities, and to demonstrate ATODA's progress. In turn, the strategic priorities contribute to the strategic outcomes.

Strategic Priorities	Strategic Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Promote non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory language, policies, practice and research2. Develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce3. Develop and maintain the capacity of the sector4. Strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations5. Strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise6. Maintain and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the ACT alcohol tobacco and other drug peak body	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. High quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system2. Evidence-informed practice and innovation3. Improved health and reduced drug related harms

Chair's Report

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the ACT and the world throughout the year. In the midst of a global health crisis, it can be too easy to lose sight of ongoing health challenges like alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms. The needs of stigmatised priority populations, such as people who use drugs and those who access alcohol and other drug services, can be overshadowed and sometimes forgotten when the focus on health issues turns to managing and responding to a pandemic. This is especially concerning when priority populations are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 and suffering more severe consequences as a result.

However, in the ACT our sector responded strongly, continuing to deliver services to the community and working closely with governments to keep the need to reduce drug harms a central part of the agenda. We also worked to expand recognition of the holistic health needs of people who use drugs beyond those directly caused by drug use. We did this through thoughtful use of the evidence, collaborative relationships and a constructive approach to solving problems. I commend the outstanding work of the ATODA team and the sector in this regard.

As a sector and as a community, we welcomed the commencement of the Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 which examines the possibility of partial decriminalisation. We know that the criminalisation of drug possession hinders drug treatment and harm reduction and perpetuates stigma, which further impacts people's health and wellbeing. The potential partial decriminalisation of personal possession of small amounts of several illicit drugs in the ACT would reduce barriers to those wishing to access treatment. It would support harm reduction measures, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce the continued stigma and discrimination experienced by people who use drugs. ATODA and the sector has played a prominent part in informing the Inquiry and we look forward to receiving the report from the Assembly in due course. The possibility that this Australia-first policy reform could occur in the midst of a pandemic is a credit to everyone associated with it.

ATODA is in a strong financial position, having built its reserves through good governance, prudent financial management and sound business development, allowing the organisation to continue to progress key priorities in our Strategic Plan. I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of the staff team, the Finance Committee and the Board in contributing to this positive outcome. On behalf of the Board and the organisation I sincerely thank Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Health, and her office, as well as colleagues in the ACT Health Directorate for their commitment and collaboration with ATODA, our members and the community again this year. We also thank our colleagues at the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Capital Health Network.

I gratefully acknowledge my Board colleagues for their professional and collegiate approach to governance, never losing sight of the purpose of the Association and the people in need of support and system reform. I also recognise and thank the sector for the work you do each day in collaboration with ATODA and each other, to support the community and advocate for change. Finally on behalf of the Board I thank the members of the ATODA team, under the sterling leadership of Dr Devin Bowles, for the outstanding work you do with a passion for purpose and professionalism in all things. The achievements set out in this Annual Report are a credit to the team, the sector, our partners and collaborators and the people we serve.



Sharon Tuffin, Chair, ATODA

Chief Executive Officer's Report

This financial year has seen the continuation of once-in-a-generation challenges that started with massive bushfires, smoke warnings and hail, and settled into the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges have disrupted the lives of people in our community including people who use drugs and specialist alcohol and other drugs services, those services' staff and those who work in policy.

In our collective work towards "a healthy, well and safe ACT community with the lowest possible levels of alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms", this adversity has presented opportunities. Our sector's potential for directly improving the lives of people who use drugs and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services through AOD treatment and harm reduction is substantial. This potential is strengthened by our capacity to act as a model to others of good relationships and policies. We can be not just excellent in our work, but an exemplar to others as well.

This year saw our community working in an exemplary way across several fronts. Within Australia, the ACT is demonstrating the benefits of more rational drug laws. We remain the only jurisdiction in which possession and cultivation of small amounts of cannabis for personal use is legalised. The ACT Legislative Assembly, over the last year, has been considering partially decriminalising a wide range of other illicit substances, including through an Inquiry into a private member's bill which would do so. ATODA's approach was to create a draft submission with our members and distribute it to our allies as early as possible, so that they could leverage this work for their own submissions. It was heartening to see how positive and supportive most of the 59 submissions to the Inquiry are in their approach to decriminalisation.

Our sector also responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with particularly good effect, keeping its focus on the health of people who use drugs or access AOD services. Specialist AOD services coordinated very effectively with each other, with government and with providers of other services to adapt to the fluctuating environment. Early results from the ATODA Workforce Survey indicate that specialist services also prioritised staff wellbeing, and I have no doubt that this was a major contributor to the sector's overall effectiveness. All of these factors were enhanced by the clinical skill of the sector's practitioners.

The ACT Health Directorate and NGOs have seen and seized the opportunity for strongly enhanced relationships. Our sector has been at the forefront of these efforts, and I want to thank colleagues on both sides for their trust, vulnerability and good faith in this process. As the Health and Community Services Directorates move towards commissioning, our sector is well-placed to demonstrate leadership. This relies on the Health Directorate's accurate understanding of our sector as being professional, highly competent and focused on outcomes for our clients.

My time at ATODA began about a month into this financial year. It has been exhilarating, (and not a little humbling) to be part of a sector responding so well to such challenging circumstances. I want to thank in particular my colleagues at ATODA, the ATODA Board, the Executives' Group, the Workers' Group and the sector more broadly for helping me manage the learning curve. It has been a pleasure to learn from you and work with you.



Devin Bowles, CEO, ATODA

Our Board and Staff

Board members were elected from the membership at ATODA's eleventh Annual General Meeting in November 2020.

Names	Position	Appointed/Resigned
Sharon Tuffin	Chair	Appointed (2 year term) at AGM 27/11/2020
Sue-Ann Polden	Deputy Chair	Appointed (2 year term) 29/11/2019
Bronwyn Hendry	Secretary	Appointed (2 year term) at AGM 27/11/2020
Gerard Byrne	Treasurer	Reappointed (2 year term) at AGM 29/11/2019
Rebecca Wood	Member	Appointed (2 year term) at AGM 27/11/2020
David Baxter	Member	Appointed (2 year term) at AGM 29/11/2019
Sarah-Jane Olsen	Member	Appointed (2 year term) at AGM 29/11/2019 Resigned 26 March 2021
Daniel Ross	Member	Appointed (2 Year Term) at AGM 27/11/2020
Devin Bowles	Public Officer	Appointed (1 year term) at AGM 27/11/2020

Staff

ATODA's staff team is made up of approximately five full-time equivalent staff, with the following people contributing over the course of the year:

Annie Bleeker	Senior Training Specialist
Amanda Bode	Senior Programs Manager
Devin Bowles	Chief Executive Officer
Jeanette Bruce	Operations Officer and Office Manager
Dave Corby	Finance and Office Manager
Anne Giles	Senior Project Manager
Julie Robert	Communications and Project Officer
Adam Poulter	Deputy CEO
Anke van der Sterren	Senior Researcher and Project Manager

Acknowledgements

ATODA's work would not be possible without the support of our members and funders, and the collaborations and partnerships with services and organisations across a range of health, community, academic and government sectors. Together we work towards achieving the aim of a healthy, well and safe ACT community with the lowest possible levels of alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) related harms.

In particular, ATODA acknowledges the contributions of consumers and people with lived experience, their families and supporters, and the workers within specialist alcohol and other drug services. We also thank the members of the Executives' and Workers' Groups for their support, advice and guidance throughout the year.

ATODA would also like to acknowledge the following people and organisations for their support.

Full, Associate and Individual Members

- ACT Shelter Association
- Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services
- Sobering Up Shelter, AOD Programs, CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
- Mr Gerard Byrne
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
- Canberra Institute of Technology
- Canberra Recovery Services, The Salvation Army
- Directions Health Services
- Families ACT
- Family Drug Support
- Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT
- Hepatitis ACT
- Karralika Programs Inc
- Mr David McDonald
- Meridian
- Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
- Mental Health Foundation ACT
- Ted Noffs Foundation
- Toora Women Inc
- Volunteering ACT
- Wellways Australia Limited
- Woden Community Service
- Youth Coalition of the ACT

Funders and Supporters

- ACT Health Directorate
- Department of Health, Australian Government
- Local Drug Action Teams, Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- Members of ATODA
- Capital Health Network (CHN)
- Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Consultants, IT, Legal, Graphic Design and Finance Support and Training Providers

- Blue Arc IT Solutions
- 360Edge
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Canberra Institute of Technology
- Mr David McDonald (Social Research & Evaluation)
- Associate Professor Anna Olsen, Social Foundations of Medicine, ANU Medical School, Australian National University
- GoHosting
- Hide & Seek Media
- Lee Jackson Design
- Lesley Porroj
- Vincents
- St John ACT
- Uniting RTO

Other Partners and Collaborators

- ACT Government across various Directorates, in particular the Alcohol and Other Drug Policy Unit, and various Australian Government departments and agencies
- ACT and National Peak organisations, professional societies, and advocacy agencies in the alcohol and other drug and blood borne virus sectors
- ACT and National Peak Organisations representing other health, social and community services
- Other services and agencies providing health and social support to people who use drugs
- Members of the Legislative Assembly and their staff
- Research and project partners from Australian National University, University of Canberra, Australian Catholic University, University of New South Wales, University of Adelaide, RMIT University, The Burnet Institute and national AOD research institutions and programs
- Alcohol and Other Drug Peak organisations in other states and territories, and the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC)
- Community pharmacies partnering to deliver the We CAN and Nicotine Replacement Therapy for Workers Programs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partners, in particular Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation

Strategic Priority:

a. Promote non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory language, policies, practice and research

1. Galvanised a response from the AOD sector and allies (locally, nationally and internationally) to the Inquiry into the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021

The Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the draft Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 invited submissions and testimony on a wide variety of issues related to diversion for personal use of illicit drugs, the ACT treatment and harm reduction system, and education activities. ATODA organised a consultation workshop attended by representatives of specialist AOD services, Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (FFDLR), drug and alcohol researchers, and representatives of allied sectors delivering health and social services to groups in which people who use drugs are over-represented. ATODA was able to draw on and distil the collective expertise of its members and allied sectors in its submission.

The sharing of summary documents for the consultation workshop, and of successive iterations of the ATODA submission, galvanised a wide response from the AOD sector and allies. ATODA also supported the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA) and FFDLR to develop guidance documents for consumers, families and friends on how to make a submission. Fifty-nine written submissions were received from a wide variety of organisations within the ACT and nationally, as well as from consumers and their families. These represented the most comprehensive record of advice provided to ACT government on ATOD issues to date, and the majority supported the draft Bill which proposes the partial decriminalisation of personal possession of small amounts of several illicit drugs in the ACT.

ATODA's CEO and Mr David McDonald gave testimony to the Inquiry on behalf of ATODA, in the longest session given to an individual organisation in the Inquiry. ATODA also contributed directly to the written submissions by the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) and its Justice Reform Group.

2. Delivered ATOD and harm reduction training

ATODA engaged with allied sectors to provide tailored and subsidised ATOD and harm reduction training. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the one-day training course was adapted to also be delivered via four modules in an online format.

The information covered in both the face-to-face and online training included content about values and attitudes towards people who use drugs, statistics relating to ATOD use in the ACT and Australia, updated information about the harms and effects of alcohol and other drugs and harm reduction approaches to use with clients. Participants were also provided with information about screening and brief intervention, referral, support and treatment services in the ACT.

ATODA continued working with the Youth Coalition of the ACT, ACT Shelter, the Mental Health Community Coalition (MHCC) of the ACT and CatholicCare ACT/Goulburn, all of which supported the implementation of the training and promoted it to workers in their

sectors and workplaces. These partnerships resulted in the delivery of five tailored ATOD harm reduction trainings in the 2020–21 financial year.

Three of these trainings were delivered online: one aimed at youth/homelessness workers; another for mental health workers; and one to counselling staff at CatholicCare. ATODA also delivered two face-to-face training sessions with the Youth Coalition of the ACT and MHCC. An additional two face-to-face training sessions were scheduled to be delivered to youth workers at the end of June—but due to the Sydney COVID-19 outbreak these were rescheduled to be delivered online in August 2021.

The ATOD harm reduction online webinar training was provided to 73 workers from 21 different youth, homelessness, education and mental health services in the ACT. Three people also attended from services in Queanbeyan, Ulladulla and Wollongong in NSW.

The face-to-face training was provided to 24 workers from the youth and mental health sector from 12 different services including Gugun Gulwan, Corrective Services, PCYC and the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions.

Participants' professional roles included outreach workers, residential workers, school counsellors, student wellbeing staff, youth workers, mental health workers, homelessness workers, police and team leaders. Participants reported a high degree of satisfaction across both the online and face-to-face training formats. All participants reported that they felt the training provided was either excellent (65 percent) or good (35 percent). Over 90 percent of participants reported that they had significantly increased their knowledge on ATOD and harm reduction strategies as a result of participating in the training. Ninety-five percent of participants reported that they had increased their confidence and skills in working with people with ATOD issues.

3. Produced and distributed the ACT ATOD Sector eBulletin

The ACT ATOD Sector eBulletin provides summaries of information and updates on important developments and events. The eBulletin reports on ATODA projects, and ATOD resources, conferences, funding opportunities and other information relevant to ATOD and allied workers in the ACT. The ACT ATOD Sector eBulletin has over 800 subscribers and reaches a diverse range of people involved in the sector, from workers to researchers and policy makers. Eight editions of the sector eBulletin were disseminated to subscribers throughout the 2020–21 financial year. In addition, 16 ACT ATOD Sector Alert eBulletins were distributed. The eBulletin is an important tool used by ATODA for information sharing and for education of members and stakeholders.

4. Produced and distributed the ATODA Research eBulletin

The monthly Research eBulletin features newly published research findings and other research activities of relevance to ATOD and allied workers in the ACT and beyond. It aims to highlight research developments specific to the ACT ATOD sector.

The Research eBulletin's evidence summaries were compiled by Mr David McDonald — National Alcohol and Drug Awards Honour Roll Inductee, Outstanding Contributions Award Recipient, Director of Social Research and Evaluation, Visiting Fellow at The Australian National University, and consultant to ATODA.

Each Research eBulletin includes an ACT Research Spotlight to highlight research undertaken locally or information that has a particular local relevance.

ATODA gratefully acknowledges David McDonald's contributions to the Research eBulletin.

5. Provided a central point for information

www.atoda.org.au

The ATODA website provides detailed information on the organisation and its activities, projects and policies, as well as publications about, and for, the ACT ATOD sector and allied stakeholders. The website remains an essential communication mechanism for ATODA and the sector more broadly and is a key tool by which stakeholders can engage with ATODA's work. The value of the website is demonstrated through its ongoing popularity, with an average of 680 monthly visits and over 1400 pages viewed every month.

6. Supported the University Drug and Alcohol Network

ATODA received a grant from the Alcohol and Drug Foundation as part of the Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) Program to support the continuation of the University Drug and Alcohol Network (UDAN).

In 2020–21 ATODA worked with three ACT Universities to continue the UDAN: the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University – ACT Diocese. The aim of the UDAN is to support the creation of ACT university campus environments that promote responsible drinking and safer drug consumption policies and practices amongst students, staff and visitors.

ATODA ran the secretariat to support the UDAN Working Group which included Senior Staff in charge of Student Wellbeing or equivalent at the three Universities. In September 2020, ATODA facilitated a meeting with the UDAN and requested input from the Universities to ascertain their interest in continuing with the Network and developing a proposal for a new project to address risky drinking amongst university students. The proposal was supported, and a new project developed, the Brief Alcohol Intervention Training (BAIT) project, which will be implemented in 2021–22.

7. Collaborated with several research organisations

ATODA collaborated with a range of research organisations and projects. This includes membership on the National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED) Methamphetamine and Emerging Drugs Clinical Research Network Working Group and participating in consultations on the NCCRED Prompt Response Network.

ATODA provided advice and input into publications of ACT Drug Trends data from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) for the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC).

ATODA assisted the Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP) at the University of New South Wales for an Australian Research Council funded project related to participation in drug policy development. ATODA also participated in a project conducted by the DPMP relating to the impact of COVID-19 on the non-government AOD sector (see section e.3).

ATODA worked with the Australian National University Medical School, initiating and supervising two student-group led long-term research projects which are ongoing. One project is a review of best practice illicit drug policies in reintegration centres to help prisoners. The other project is analysing data from the We CAN Program (see section c.7.) pilot to investigate attitudes and behaviours related to smoking cessation and use of nicotine replacement therapy. ATODA maintained an ongoing and wide-ranging collaboration with Associate Professor Anna Olsen at the Australian National University.

8. Engaged with the media, including directly and by promoting the voices of allies

ATODA engaged with several media platforms, including the *Canberra Times*, ABC News and the *Canberra Weekly* throughout the year to provide insight into pill testing, drug legislation and legalisation of cannabis in the ACT. ATODA was heavily quoted in a November the *Canberra Times* [article](#) about drug arrests. In December ATODA featured in an ABC News online [article](#), as well as an [article](#) in the *Canberra Weekly* about decriminalisation of small amounts of illicit drugs. ATODA featured in two ABC News features in February, the [first](#) marking a year of cannabis legalisation in Canberra and the [second](#) about the decriminalisation bill. The two stories led to two TV appearances and one local radio appearance.

Behind the scenes, ATODA also worked to amplify the voices of our allies in the media, with a particular focus on the perspectives of people who use drugs and their families. This resulted in more balanced and nuanced coverage of what are often emotive issues.

Strategic Priority:

b. Develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce

1. Facilitated training under the ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Qualifications Strategy

The ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Qualifications Strategy aims to ensure the development and maintenance of a competent and professional specialist workforce in the ACT. It also aims to ensure that all ATOD workers in the ACT have a shared minimum knowledge and skill base.

The three main components of the Strategy are: the AOD Skill Set (AOD specialised units of the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs), the non-AOD units from the Certificate IV in AOD, and First Aid Training. The Strategy has maintained a focus on the provision of education and training through AOD specialist industry providers including through partnerships with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and Uniting RTO. The First Aid Training provider was St John ACT.

Due to COVID-19 and the consequent restrictions, ATODA postponed the start of the Alcohol and Other Drug Skill Set training to allow Uniting RTO, the training provider, to adapt their delivery method. The delivery method for this training moved from face-to-face training to an online format combined with some distance learning.

A total of 50 scholarships were provided in this financial year which included 10 participants completing training for the AOD Skill Set, 24 participants in First Aid and 16 in non-AOD units from the Certificate IV in AOD. The training delivery also includes the provision of multiple student support days and an information session for participants and managers.

Following the completion of the training, participants received a nationally recognised Statement of Attainment. All of the training is coordinated by ATODA and fully subsidised for participating ATOD workers.

2. Delivered the Safer Families: Specialist Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Project

In 2020, ATODA was contracted by ACT Health and the Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety (the Office) to work with AOD specialist services to trial the ACT Government's draft Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (DFV Framework) in the AOD sector, and to ensure that staff within AOD specialist services received training appropriate to the AOD sector.

ATODA worked with AOD services to research, write and submit a report that found that the DFV Framework was broadly consistent with the specialist AOD sector's values and aspirations for reducing the prevalence and harm of DFV in the ACT and that most programs met or exceeded many of its requirements. It noted the differences in NGO and government responses and recommended that additional work be undertaken to adapt the Framework for use in various NGO sectors, including modifying language to be invitational, and associated activities (including training) to be empowering and developmental. The report recommended commissioning further work to collaboratively research, develop and test new models for working with AOD service consumers who use violence, to motivate them to take

responsibility for changing their behaviour. Such models could potentially include integrated treatment for AOD harm reduction, DFV prevention and child safety.

ATODA demonstrated the utility of developing a specific training package for workers in specialist AOD services to improve understandings of, and skills in, responding to people who are experiencing or perpetrating domestic and family violence. ATODA engaged clinical consultants, 360Edge, to design and deliver a series of training workshops for the AOD workforce, beginning in June 2021 and extending into the following year. The workshops were ran in June, July and August 2021, and had very positive evaluations from students.

3. Convened the ACT ATOD Workers Group

The ACT ATOD Workers Group is involved in the development, implementation, coordination, evaluation and promotion of key sector support activities for the alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector in the ACT. The group identifies and seeks to respond to a range of issues relevant to frontline workers. The group continues to function as an essential component of the sector's governance and acts as a key advisory structure to ATODA.

The group implemented a workplan of diverse activities over the last 12 months with secretariat support provided by ATODA. Some priorities included:

- Informing ATODA's capacity building and policy activities
- Identifying issues experienced by clients, workers and services due to the COVID-19 situation and identifying appropriate actions
- Supporting the development and implementation of the Workforce Profile Survey
- Providing support for the implementation of the Qualifications Strategy
- Providing guidance and advice to the development of proposals through the Inquiry into the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 and review into ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drug harm reduction policies, processes and priorities.

Workers Group members are:

- Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services
- Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT
- AOD Program, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- AOD Program, Toora Women Inc.
- AOD Program, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
- Canberra Recovery Services, The Salvation Army
- CatholicCare Canberra and Goulburn
- Directions Health Services
- Hepatitis ACT
- Karralika Programs Inc.
- Solaris Program, ACT Corrective Services
- Ted Noffs Foundation

ATODA gratefully acknowledges the input and support of members of the ACT ATOD Workers Group.

Strategic Priority:

c. Develop and maintain the capacity of the sector

1. Influenced the development of the ACT Government's approach to commissioning

The ACT Health Directorate informed NGOs that it would be following a new approach to procuring contracts, through a commissioning process. This approach involves co-design with service users and providers of procured services, and selection from a range of procurement modalities appropriate to the situation. After gaining the views of the sector, ATODA engaged with executives in several areas and at several levels of the Health Directorate about commissioning of AOD service contracts beyond June 2021. ATODA also provided written feedback on the proposed commissioning principles and worked throughout the process to highlight the sector's strengths. The quality of work carried out by the AOD sector was recognised in a short document summarising how the commissioning process linked with wider ACT Government health planning processes. ATODA and the Health Directorate also initiated discussion on renewal of the funding contract for ATODA as a peak body.

2. Influenced the ACT Government's development of the Territory-wide Health Services Plan and AOD Services Plan

ATODA engaged with the planning section of the ACT Health Directorate as part of the consultation process for a new Territory-wide Health Services Plan (TwHSP). This included advocacy for the development of a co-designed Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan for the ACT that is funder- and provider-neutral. ACT Health gave a commitment to provide the opportunity for face-to-face consultation with AOD sector representatives on the TwHSP, and to engage with them to develop the AOD Plan in 2021-22.

3. Made a submission to the 2021–2022 Budget

ATODA provided a written submission to the ACT Budget process, 2021–22, through the ACT Government's community sector consultation process. This advocated for Labor Party election targets to be met including a comprehensive audit of AOD service infrastructure, Green Party targets to be met including a 50 percent increase in base funding for AOD services in 2021–22 and increasing investment in nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) for AOD service users via upscaling of the successful We CAN Program. The submission included financial modelling of projected reductions to the burden of disease from increased NRT investment estimated at \$2.6 per \$1 invested in the first year alone. A link to the submission is available here: [ACT-Budget-Submission-2021-2022](#). The verbal pitch provided to the ACT Government was commended by ACTCOSS as a model to the NGO sector.

4. Coordinated and administered the ACT Government's sector stimulus funding

In July 2020, the ACT ATOD sector received funding to support COVID-19 responses and responsiveness in non-government organisations (NGO) that deliver specialist AOD

services. Through a co-design process, the Specialist AOD Executives determined the needs of the sector in the COVID-19 response against three priorities:

- AOD worker/practitioner wellbeing initiatives;
- capacity building for AOD organisations; and
- supporting workers and service users through the provision of technology.

Executives reached a consensus position on a shared activity for the sector—training that would provide an overview of the trends of AOD use during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to informing engagements with clients, including the provision of harm reduction information. The training was developed and delivered by ATODA's Senior Training Specialist and included contributions from three senior researchers from The Burnet Institute, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), and RMIT University, who each discussed their research findings. This shared activity was delivered in November and December 2020 through both a face-to-face format (4 sessions) and through an online webinar option (2 sessions).

ATODA, on behalf of the sector, distributed the bulk of the sector stimulus funding directly to non-government specialist AOD services—seven services opted to participate and put forward projects that met one or more of the three priorities (listed above). These seven organisations undertook seventeen separate activities with an approximately equal spread across the three priorities. Examples of activities included: training to strengthen workforce capacity in therapeutic treatments, cultural awareness and working through online platforms; implementing and maintaining regimes for sanitising and cleaning; improving IT infrastructure to better respond to and support therapeutic work with service users; supporting service users to maintain stability in their lives and to engage with AOD treatment by providing practical assistance to access technologies and online services; and a multimedia suite of materials on recognising and seeking help for problematic drinking, specifically targeting young people.

5. Maintained the ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services Online Directory

<https://directory.atoda.org.au/>

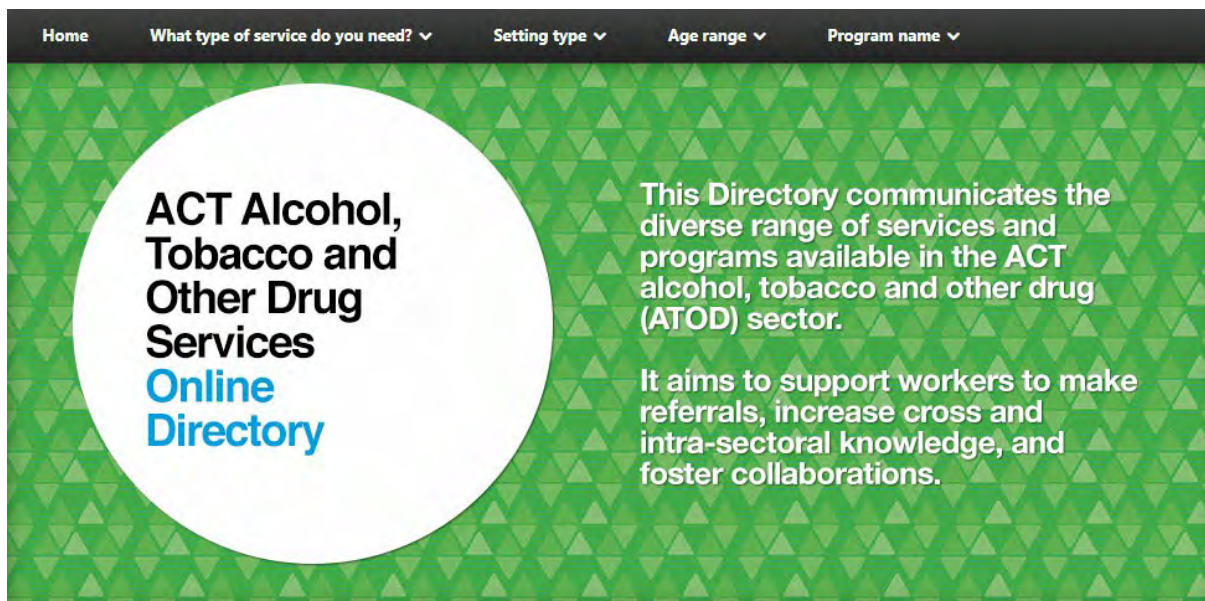
The ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services Online Directory (the Directory) communicates the diverse range of services and programs available in the sector. It aims to support workers to make referrals, increase cross- and intra-sectoral knowledge, and foster collaborations.

The Directory includes:

- 36 detailed program profiles
- A full Directory and quick reference guides by service name and service types
- An interactive map of service locations
- Additional program profiles from the allied sectors

In 2020, ATODA undertook point-in-time updates of the Directory to document modifications to the operations of specialist AOD services necessitated by the COVID-19 situation.

In the past year, the Directory had 12,811 visitors with 24,510 pages viewed.



6. Convened the ACT Specialist ATOD Executives Group

A meeting of specialist ACT alcohol and other drug service Executives was convened approximately six-weekly during the first half of the year and monthly from February 2021. Chairing and secretariat support was provided by ATODA, to enable information-sharing at an Executive level, both between Executives of AOD services themselves, as well as between Executives and ATODA as the peak body. It provided a space for key issues of collective interest to be progressed, as well as a means by which external stakeholders provided information to Executives by invitation.

The Group had both an operational and a policy focus, including related to the international, national and local drug policy agenda; contracts and contract management with both the Commonwealth and Territory Governments; health service planning and service costings. ATODA also organised two meetings between specialist AOD service executives and the ACT government regarding changes to procurement processes.

7. Administered the We CAN (nicotine replacement therapy) Program

The We CAN Program—Communities Accessing all-types of Nicotine replacement therapy—aims to reduce smoking among people utilising specialist AOD non-government organisations in the ACT by providing free access to 8–12 weeks-worth of any types of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) through vouchers redeemable at partnering community pharmacies, complemented by smoking cessation advice and support. The Program is managed by ATODA, funded by ACT Health, and is implemented in partnership with specialist AOD non-government organisations and community pharmacies.

The Program enables best practice smoking cessation clinical treatment to be implemented as part of routine AOD treatment and support to this population with extremely high smoking rates—77 percent of people accessing specialist AOD services are using tobacco (data from the 2018 SUSOS). The implementation of tobacco screening, brief intervention and the provision of NRT through the We CAN Program is consistent with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioner Guidelines for Supporting Smoking Cessation.

The We CAN Program provides vouchers through eight specialist NGO AOD services, and partners with six community pharmacies to provide smoking cessation support to specialist AOD service users. Between January and June 2021, around 200 vouchers were ‘in-the-field’—that is, they were either being used by service users or they were being held by services to provide to service users. During 2020–21, the provision and uptake of the We CAN Program was impacted by reduced intakes to residential services and limitation to face-to-face contacts due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The delivery of this program is consistent with the ACT Government’s priority of “developing approaches to reduce smoking rates among high-risk population groups”. Around one in ten people who smoke in the ACT are accessing specialist alcohol and other drug services. The provision of best practice nicotine dependence treatment and smoking cessation support—such as the support delivered through the We CAN Program—within these services has the potential to support ten percent of ACT smokers to make quit attempts. This would have a real impact on life-expectancy in the ACT. Analysis of data from the Program, however, shows that the current funding received by ATODA is sufficient to provide vouchers to only around 3-4 percent of smokers who are accessing these services.

ATODA wishes to thank the workers in the AOD sector who are implementing the We CAN Program with service users, and the pharmacists and staff from the community pharmacies who provide NRT and smoking cessation support: Capital Chemist Dickson; Capital Chemist Tuggeranong Square; Capital Chemist University of Canberra; Chemist on Northbourne; Erindale Pharmacy; and Your Discount Chemist, Griffith.



8. Convened the ACT ATOD Workers Group

See section b.3.

Strategic Priority:

d. Strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations

1. Actively participated in the NGO Leadership Group

ATODA actively participated in the ACT's NGO Leadership Group, which provides a mechanism for consultation, advice and co-design between the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and NGOs. ATODA contributed to discussions on a wide range of topics, including the Territory-wide Health Services Plan, COVID-19 adaptation and commissioning.

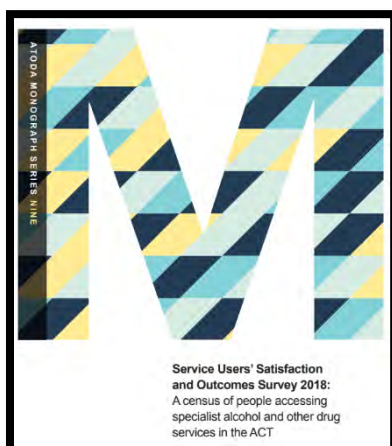
2. Promulgated results of the SUSOS via publication and a series of presentations

The ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector has been conducting a Service Users' Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey (SUSOS) every three-years since 2009. Implemented with all service users accessing specialist AOD treatment and support services on a single day, the survey aims to obtain a snapshot of the levels and patterns of satisfaction of service users of ACT Health-funded specialist ATOD services, and the experiences and self-reported outcomes for people who access these services. The SUSOS has been an excellent data source for the ACT ATOD sector to improve service responsiveness to the needs of people accessing specialist AOD services; inform quality improvement programs in the participating services; and inform broader policy and service planning processes in the ATOD sector, including the current AOD health services planning processes.

In July 2020, ATODA launched the report of the 2018 Service Users' Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey (SUSOS) as the eighth publication in the ATODA Monograph series (available here: [SUSOS monograph](#)). The report highlighted the demographic profile of the population of AOD service users, and investigated their experiences, levels and patterns of satisfaction and outcomes when accessing these services.

ATODA presented these findings in several forums and a range of audiences, including to: the specialist AOD services; the AOD Policy Unit, ACTHD; and to the October 2020 meeting of the Drug Strategy Action Plan Advisory Group.

ATODA would like to thank all service users who participated in the 2018 SUSOS and the workers at the 25 sites who facilitated the implementation of the survey.



3. Secured funding to enhance the SUSOS by enhancing stakeholder perspectives in survey design in collaboration with the sector and service users

The SUSOS has provided the ATOD sector with excellent data over the past decade, and there have been a number of deliberate and gradual changes made to the survey over time to improve its utility and validity. However, the sector recognises that further changes are needed to both the survey tool (the questionnaire) and to the method of its implementation to improve the validity, reliability, acceptability and usability of the SUSOS. This will build on ATODA's, and the ACT ATOD sector's, existing reputation for developing and delivering high-quality work.

ATODA secured funding from the ACT Health Directorate to undertake a co-design process with service users, service providers and policy makers to improve the content and design of the SUSOS. The aim is to better capture the areas of service-experience that are of interest and importance to people accessing ATOD treatment and harm reduction services. This process will be undertaken during the first half of 2022 to inform the next iteration of the SUSOS.

4. Assisted the Capital Health Network with needs assessment activities

ATODA attended regular meetings with the Capital Health Network on undertaking fit for purpose AOD specific planning, needs assessment and contracting activities. This has included discussions on:

- consultations related to the development of their AOD needs assessment, including provisional discussion about the option of ATODA being contracted to provide an updated 2022–25 report as part of the overall assessment of health needs;
- improving AOD-related engagement processes through accurate presentation of ATOD data and collaboration opportunities related to AOD data enhancement, including potential application of the Drug and Alcohol Services Planning model to the ACT; and
- opportunities to strengthen modelling of demand for AOD services and to update costings for services.

5. Developed and distributed the Workforce Profile Questionnaire

During the first half of 2021, ATODA worked with the specialist AOD services to implement the sixth ACT ATOD Workforce Profile. This Profile provides important information to the ACT ATOD sector about the state of the AOD workforce, qualifications, training and supervision needs, remuneration and wellbeing. Information from the survey allows services and the sector to better respond to workforce needs; enables ATODA to better advocate for the workforce and sector; and provides data that is central to planning for AOD service delivery, training and workforce development.

The ACT ATOD Workforce Profile is unique in Australia as it is the only jurisdiction-level AOD workforce survey administered across both government and non-government services at the same time. This is a great testament to our unified ATOD sector in the ACT. The survey has also been administered consistently over a long period of time (since 2006) providing the sector with important trend data.

The Workforce Profile is administered as two surveys: one is offered to all workers in the ATOD sector; and the other is completed by the CEO, or their delegate, on behalf of each organisation. In 2021, nine organisations participated, with a total of 188 workers completing the survey across the entire sector. The data is being analysed during the second half of 2021 and will be published in 2022.

6. Supported the University Drug and Alcohol Network

See section a.6.

7. Participated in research with other AOD Peaks—The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the non-government alcohol and other drug sector

See section e.3.

Strategic Priority:

e. Strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise

1. Reinvigorated relations with the ACT Government Health Directorate

ATODA appreciates the ACT Health Directorate's genuine and effective efforts to enhance its culture following the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services. This, as well as the re-establishment of the AOD Policy Section as the first point of contact for ATODA and the sector, has contributed to improved opportunities for ATODA and the Health Directorate to strengthen and reinvigorate their relationship. ATODA met with the AOD policy staff at least weekly to discuss and progress shared AOD policy priorities. Priority topics included commissioning, the Territory-wide Health Services Plan and the ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan. Closer cooperation resulted in better coordination between the Health Directorate and the AOD service sector.

Improved relations have also enabled enhanced engagement with other areas of the Health Directorate, including on tobacco policy and COVID-19 through a variety of fora. ATODA also participated in several ACT Health Directorate consultation processes, including on commissioning and the establishment of Safe Haven Cafes.

2. Provided advocacy regarding the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List

ATODA continued to participate in the Drug Treatment Working Group to collaboratively support the development and implementation of the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List (DASL), also known as the ACT Drug and Alcohol Court. In particular, ATODA continued to advocate for an evaluation of the DASL to properly consider therapeutic outcomes and processes, including the Court's engagement with specialist AOD services providers. ATODA also advocated for proper costings of AOD treatment delivered through the DASL, a considered approach to procurement, and adequate time for AOD service procurement processes.

3. Engaged with other state and territory AOD peaks

ATODA participated in regular meetings of state and territory AOD peak CEOs. The Peaks Capacity Building Network (PCBN) forms part of the ongoing collaboration between the Australian State and Territory AOD peak organisations, which have been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health to build the capacity of the Alcohol and Other Drugs sectors in their respective states. The State and Territory AOD peaks participate in monthly network meetings with a specific focus on capacity building. The PCBN provides a centralised point for sharing information and resources and leveraging capacity to respond to national workforce/sector development requirements of the AOD sector in relation to the complex needs of clients and AOD services. It provides an opportunity for building broader, including national, responses to capacity building priorities in the AOD sector, through joint identification of issues, networking and coordinated planning.

In the latter half of 2020, ATODA collaborated with the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA); the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania (ATDC); and the Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP) to conduct research on the impact of COVID-19 on the demand for treatment, service delivery, workforce, and business practices for AOD

treatment services, and the impacts for the AOD treatment sector, service delivery modes, funders and service users. The project built on a survey earlier in 2020 conducted by the AOD Peaks that sought to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on AOD services. The project monograph (NDARC Monograph No.34) is available at: [Monographs | Social Policy Research Centre – UNSW Sydney](#).

4. Maintained the ACT electronic Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ACT eASSIST)

ATODA has continued to host and maintain the ACT electronic Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ACT eASSIST) to support health and community workers to identify ATOD issues, match treatment and support needs, communicate services and referral pathways, and provide ATOD information, including information with a harm reduction focus. The ACT eASSIST was developed through a partnership with the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre at the Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (now based at the University of Adelaide) and is an electronic version of the Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST), designed by the World Health Organization.

5. Contributed to ACT and national coordination mechanisms

ATODA continued its regular participation in meetings of the Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Council (AADC), the national AOD sector peak body, including supporting the early activities of the AADC. ATODA continued its membership of the National Naloxone Reference Group and the ACT Peaks Forum, facilitated by the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS). The Peaks forum is a meeting of ACT community sector peak body representatives to share information and discuss issues relevant to the ACT community sector. It enables the peaks to represent the ACT community sector as a united body on issues of common importance and in public policy debate. ATODA also participated in the Strengthening Harm Reduction in Prison Working Group and the ACT Corrective Service Reintegration Centre Reference Group.

6. Published, promoted and secured additional funding for the SUSOS

See sections d.2 and d.3.

7. Engaged with inquiries in the ACT Legislative Assembly and elsewhere

In addition to the leadership of the sector in engaging with the Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 (see details under a.1), ATODA obtained sector perspectives and made a submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Child and Youth Health. ATODA also provided expert testimony to a Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry on legalising cannabis.

Strategic Priority

f. Maintain and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the ACT alcohol tobacco and other drug peak body

1. Maintained a surplus over the financial year

ATODA maintained a surplus over the financial year, enabling continued financial stability for the organisation.

2. Sought and secured new funding

ATODA held regular meetings with ACT Health Directorate's AOD Section, the Capital Health Network, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services Grants Hub, and the Commonwealth Department of Health ATOD Branch. These provided an opportunity to strengthen dialogue around policy and practice developments and deepen partnerships with these funders.

ATODA secured from both the ACT Government and Commonwealth governments an extension of the Equal Remuneration Order provision which supplements basic pay rates in recognition of the general rates of low pay in the community sector.

ATODA secured additional funding from the Health Directorate for an extension of the SUSOS Project. ATODA secured funding from the Australian Drug Foundation for the work of the University Drug Action Network (UDAN).



ATODA
Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug
Association ACT

Phone: (02) 6249 6358

Web: www.atoda.org.au
www.directory.atoda.org.au
www.act-eassist.org.au
www.impactalcohol.org.au

Email: info@atoda.org.au

Mail Address: PO Box 7187, Watson, ACT 2602