



Media Release: ATODA Welcomes Decriminalisation Legislation Debate

3 August 2022

The Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) welcomes the debate regarding the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 in the Legislative Assembly today.

ATODA CEO, Dr Devin Bowles said: “The ACT Government’s proposed legislation puts the ACT at the forefront of evidence-based legislative approaches to reducing harm from drugs, not just in Australia but around the world. Decriminalisation reduces stigma, which means people who already use drugs can more readily seek help if they need it.”

The debate follows the recent announcement from the Minister for Health Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA of an additional \$13 million investment in alcohol and other drug treatment services in the 2022-23 Budget. ATODA has warmly welcomed this investment.

Dr Bowles said, “Given the ACT Government’s recent increase in funding for the alcohol and other drug sector, we are pleased that the Government is backing up legislative reform with significant investment in the alcohol and other sector. I welcome the ACT Government’s genuine commitment to responding to drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal issue.”

Dr Bowles said “The community support for legislative change has been heartening. The alcohol and other drug sector is eager to work with the ACT Government and the ACT community to ensure that legislative change achieves its intended goal of reducing drug-related harms, reducing stigma and supporting people who use drugs through the health system rather than the criminal justice system.”

“The proposed legislation includes an evaluation. This is critical so that the relevant stakeholders, including the alcohol and other drug sector, people who use drugs, police and researchers can inform the Government of any required adjustments. It will also provide an Australian evidence base for other jurisdictions in Australia, recognising that the ACT is leading the way.”

ATODA welcomes the continued debate on the tabled legislation and proposed amendments.

For more information or comment, please contact Dr Devin Bowles, CEO, ATODA on 0413 435 080.

ATODA is the peak body for the alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector in the ACT. Its purpose is to lead and influence positive outcomes in policy, practice and research by providing collaborative leadership for intersectoral action on the social determinants of harmful drug use, and on societal responses to drug use and to people who use drugs. ATODA’s vision is a healthy, well and safe ACT community with the lowest possible levels of alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harms.