



Media Release: ATODA welcomes implementation of drug law reform in the ACT

28 October 2023

The Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) welcomes the implementation of the *Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill (2021)*. This is a significant day for drug law reform not only in the ACT, but also setting a national precedent as the first jurisdiction in Australia to take this step.

ATODA CEO, Anita Mills said “Drug law reform in our community puts the ACT at the forefront of evidence-based legislative approaches to reducing harm from drugs. We know from evidence that decriminalisation reduces stigma, which can encourage help-seeking behaviour for people who need support. Decriminalisation also helps shift the dial on broader community perceptions around drug use.”

From today, people in the ACT who are found in possession of small quantities of illicit drugs for personal use will be given the option of attending an alcohol and other drug treatment session or paying a fine. This diversion keeps people away from the criminal justice system, instead giving them a chance to talk about their drug use in the broader context of their personal health and well-being.

Ms Mills said “Contact with the criminal justice system, particularly at a young age or for marginalised population groups can have devastating life-long consequences. Putting health first in drug law reform redirects the system to respond to the needs of the person, rather than pursuing a punitive response.”

“The next phase of the drug law reform in the ACT will require a robust monitoring and evaluation to ensure that we are able to map the impacts on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs specialist treatment services, as well as broader impacts on health, community and justice sectors. It is essential that the ACT Government continues to lead in this area, and ATODA welcomes continued collaboration to ensure the drug law reforms achieve their intended goal of harm reduction.”

For people who would like more information about the reforms including what the changes mean in practice, what happens at the health session and allowable quantities of identified illicit drugs, please visit the [ACT Drug Law Reforms](#) page.

For more information or comment, please contact Ms Anita Mills, CEO, ATODA on 0431 504 805.

ATODA is the peak body for the alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector in the ACT. Our 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.