



## Media Release: Budget Submission 2025-2026

24 February 2025

The Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) has published their ACT Budget Submission 2025-2026, highlighting five key areas for increased funding in the alcohol tobacco and other drug (ATOD) sector, including a call for sustainable resourcing and expanding harm reduction measures in the ACT.

The submission lays out what is needed to create a sustainable ATOD sector, focusing on a need for increased funding for workforce training and supporting the expansion of a peer workforce. Last year's commissioning process provided long-term funding certainty for the sector, but there is an ongoing strain caused by the true cost of service delivery in a fiscally constrained environment. The sector is also seeing an increase in clients with complex and co-occurring needs, such as people with mental health conditions and alcohol or other drug use.

ATODA CEO Anita Mills said, "The demand for ATOD services in the ACT continues to grow, and we need a range of services and a capable workforce to meet that demand. The rising cost of living and the housing crisis are only exacerbating the problem."

In the submission, ATODA also calls for expanding harm reduction measures, such as making CanTEST, Canberra's fixed pill-testing site, a permanent fixture in the ACT health system. The Australian government's total expenditure on illicit drugs contributes only 1.6 percent on harm reduction measures. Evidence shows that these measures work at reducing the rate of health harms and overdose.

ATODA supports drug decriminalisation as a harm reduction measure. The evaluation of the *Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021*, which came into effect in October 2023, is due to be delivered in early 2026.

"We encourage the ACT Government to continue to work in partnership with the ATOD sector in evaluation of drug decriminalisation in the ACT," Ms Mills said. "Referring people into therapeutic health settings rather than through the legal process is less stigmatising. We can achieve better health outcomes through a person-centred and health-based approach."

ATODA is also calling on a coordinated government response to address the harmful impacts of alcohol on population health. Online sales and delivery of alcohol should be reduced to the hours of 10am-10pm with a two-hour safety pause between ordering and delivery.

"In 2022 alcohol-related deaths in Australia reached their highest in 10 years. It is time for government and policy makers to take a public health approach to liquor licensing laws in the ACT," Ms Mills said.

[ATODA's Budget Submission 2025-2026](#) has been published on the ACT Government's Budget Consultation website.

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

*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 ACT community with reduced alcohol, tobacco and drug related harms, served by a high-quality treatment and harm reduction sector.*

*While the term AOD (alcohol and other drug) is commonly used to refer to the alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector, ATODA's preference is to use the term ATOD. This acknowledges the role that specialist service providers in this sector play in providing tobacco cessation support, and because tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of the burden of disease in Australia, contributing far more than alcohol or all illicit drugs combined.*

**Advice for media: Communicating about alcohol and other drugs**

Mindframe is funded by the Australian Government and supports safe media reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide, mental ill-health, alcohol and other drugs. Relevant resources include:

- Mindframe Guidelines for communicating about alcohol and other drugs: <https://mindframe.org.au/alcohol-other-drugs/communicating-about-alcohol-other-drugs/mindframe-guidelines>
- Mindframe guidelines for image use in communicating about mental ill-health, suicide and alcohol and other drugs: <https://mindframe.org.au/images-matter-mindframe-guidelines-for-image-use>
- Adding help-seeking information: <https://mindframe.org.au/alcohol-other-drugs/communicating-about-alcohol-other-drugs/adding-help-seeking-information>