



The Hon Dr Mike Freeland MP
Chair
House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Disability
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Health.Reps@aph.gov.au

Submitted by:
Anita Mills
Chief Executive Officer
Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA)
info@atoda.org.au / (02) 6249 6358 / PO Box 7009 Kaleen, ACT 2617

30 October 2025

Dear Dr Freeland,

Re. Re-Submission to the *Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia*

ATODA originally submitted to this Inquiry on 4 October 2024 and welcomes the opportunity to update our submission with further information. This cover letter provides the updates that we believe are relevant to the Inquiry, as per the Committee's *Issues paper relating to the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia*. The Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) represents the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) sector in the ACT.

ATODA would like to highlight the ACT's current drug decriminalisation law as a model for other Australian jurisdictions. A key feature is that the Territory has significantly reduced the criminal penalties for the possession of many common illicit drugs, whereby people may opt to receive either a \$100 fine or a health and information session from Canberra Health Services. So far, the scheme has seen most people choose the health and information session, greatly expanding the opportunity for vital health and harm reduction interventions. There has been a notable shift in the willingness of the ACT Police to treat AOD concerns as a health rather than a criminal issue and ATODA can confirm that despite concerns the reforms may overwhelm the sector's capacity, this has not occurred. In early 2026, the ACT will release an independent evaluation of the impacts of this drug law reform. We urge the Committee to review this report to identify the advantages and learning points for future implementation of drug decriminalisation laws in other jurisdictions in Australia.

We would like to draw attention to the benefits of drug checking for this Inquiry, and the learnings from the ACT's CanTEST service as Australia's first fixed site drug checking service, as detailed within our 'Harm Reduction measures in the ACT' section. We note the importance of drug checking services to detect new substances entering the market and their role in monitoring the increasingly unpredictable global and national drug landscapes. It would be of even greater benefit to all

Australians if each State and Territory had a drug checking service for the purpose of monitoring the evolving and emerging types of illicit drug use which would increase capacity to develop appropriate health responses, at both the State or Territory and national levels. The recent closure of Queensland's first fixed site drug checking service, CheQpoint, runs counter to the evidence base that drug checking reduces harms and saves lives. Australian Government expenditure on ATOD allocates only 1.6 percent of the available budget to harm reduction, despite substantial evidence that measures such as these reduce health harms and deaths from ATOD use.¹

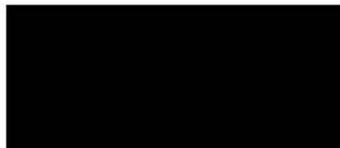
Our submission articulates the need for resourcing that adequately matches the demand for treatment and the complexity of concerns of people using ATOD treatment services. ATODA notes that an evaluation of the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's Drug and Alcohol Program (DAP) is currently being completed, and scoping work is being undertaken by the Department for the next iteration of the National Drug Strategy, with the [current Strategy](#) set to expire in 2026. We are supportive of the opportunities that may arise from these processes, however, we note with concern the status of Commonwealth funding into AOD services which is set to expire on 30 June 2026. We await confirmation regarding the next funding cycle and note that prolonged uncertainty has direct impacts on jobs and service delivery. Further, we highlight the need for a national governance structure to better support integrated planning, strategic coordination, cohesive funding approaches, and responses to emerging challenges.

Our submission provides examples of how the ACT ATOD sector is working across the community to support people with complex needs. To continue to work at full capacity in delivering the best outcomes for individuals, families and society, the ATOD sector needs to be bolstered by resourcing that matches demand.

Yours sincerely,



Anita Mills
Chief Executive Officer



Sharon Tuffin
Chair