



atoda annual report

2019-2020



ATODA
Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug
Association ACT

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. We value 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 2019-2020 annual report should be read in conjunction with several accompanying documents including our:

- [Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#)
- Financial Statements 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020

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

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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. Throughout this annual report, activities are cross-referenced to the strategic priorities and outcomes to demonstrate our progress.

| Strategic Priorities | Strategic Outcomes |
|---|---|
| a. Promote non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory language, policies, practice and research | 1. High quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system |
| b. Develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce | 2. Evidence-informed practice and innovation |
| c. Develop and maintain the capacity of the sector | 3. Improved health and reduced drug related harms |
| d. Strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations | |
| e. Strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise | |
| f. Maintain and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the ACT alcohol tobacco and other drug peak body | |

Chair's Report

I would like to begin by acknowledging the affected communities—the individuals, their families and friends—our workforce, our sector leaders and our decision-makers for their continued commitment, focus and care shown during this extraordinary year. We have seen incredible resilience, tragedy, teamwork and commitment.

We have all stepped up to the challenges, and we have done it together.

Fortunately, our sector is well practiced at information sharing, collaboration, co-design and collective impact—these skills and foundations have served us well in our day to day work and have come to the fore in a crisis. We know why we are here, who we are here to serve and what we are good at.

At the very beginning of COVID-19 our sector was proactive and on the front foot successfully advocating for the establishment of fit-for-purpose risk management strategies and emergency governance groups and led the way locally and nationally.

This year again saw our sector demonstrate that we are most effective when we work together. The leadership from ATODA as the peak, producing high quality policy work with the sector this year has been incredible. We continue to advocate for the ACT Government to co-design a specialist alcohol and other drug services plan, within its health services planning area, to ensure that we have the workforce, services and infrastructure we need to serve the community now and into the future.

We had hoped that this year would be a year of celebration, to mark 10 years of achievements of our sector and the first decade of ATODA. When we can, it will be important for us to have those moments together and to reflect on our collective achievements.

Those celebrations and achievements would not be possible were it not for the significant contribution, leadership and personal commitment of the inaugural CEO, Carrie Fowlie, whom we bid farewell to this year. Carrie has been the face of ATODA and a driving force of the organisation, supported by a highly skilled team, for more than 10 years. She has worked hard to amplify the voices of the people we are here to serve, to bring rigour, evidence and common-sense to policy and decision making, and to support the sector to work together for the benefit of all. Although we have each shared our wishes for the future, and our gratitude for the legacy she has left, I would again on behalf of the Board and the sector, like to congratulate and to thank Carrie for her outstanding work and the outcomes ATODA has achieved under her leadership.

I would also like to thank Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Health, ACT Health Directorate Directors-General, other colleagues in government, my fellow Board members, the ATODA staff team and our sector for your support and commitment to the work we do for our community.

Sharon Tuffin, Chair, ATODA

Chief Executive Officer's Report

This year has been extraordinary and it's hard to remember the months before we were in crisis—bushfires, hazardous smoke, hail and COVID-19. I've never been more proud to be a community worker, to work in health and to work for social justice.

This year has had other challenges too. The ACT Government held an Independent Review into the workplace culture within ACT public health services and there have been substantial changes within its leadership. The culture within ACT public health services directly impacts on the community, drug policy and services. The sound foundations and infrastructure of our sector served us well through this upheaval to maintain service delivery and quality of care. Fortunately the sector holds the corporate knowledge and drug policy and service delivery expertise needed for Canberra. The sector worked together to ensure that initiatives remained based on evidence and rigorous health services planning, and prioritised the viability and sustainability of the specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug service system to meet community needs.

2020 began with the ACT becoming the first jurisdiction in Australia to legalise the personal possession, use and cultivation of cannabis. This is one important step forward to end the criminalisation of people who use *all* drugs.

The sector mobilised quickly and effectively to respond to COVID-19. Proactive and successful advocacy with Ministers and government resulted in our sector establishing emergency response processes that centred the people who were most at risk. It was incredible and inspiring to watch people work together on shared goals and solving problems in real-time. If this type of drug policy co-production and problem solving can be continued into the future, when the public health emergency is over, there is no limit to what drug policy achievements can be made for Canberra.

I was privileged to co-chair the Non-Government Organisation Leadership Group, which pivoted and repurposed its capabilities to be the central coordinating body for COVID-19 responses and health NGOs.

The last decade (and the three years leading up to it to collaboratively establish ATODA as the peak) have been incredible. Canberra and the sector have achieved so much! Our clear mission, being constantly guided by evidence, centring affected communities, and working together have been our ingredients for success.

This is my last annual report with ATODA—thank you to everyone! It is an incredible privilege to work with you and to serve the Canberra community.

Carrie Fowlie, CEO, ATODA

Our Board, Staff and Consultants

Board

A Board was elected from the membership at ATODA's ninth Annual General Meeting in November 2018.

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Sharon Tuffin | Chair | Karralika Programs Inc. |
| Sue-Ann Polden | Deputy Chair | CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn |
| Gerard Byrne | Treasurer | The Salvation Army |
| Bronwyn Hendry | Secretary | Directions Health Services |
| Susan Clarke-Lindfield | Member | Toora Women Inc. |
| David Baxter | Member | Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy |
| Sarah-Jane Olsen | Member | Hepatitis ACT |
| Kate Gardner | Member | Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services |
| Carrie Fowlie | Ex-Officio Member | Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT |

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:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Carrie Fowlie | Chief Executive Officer |
| Amanda Bode | Senior Programs Manager |
| Dave Corby | Finance and Office Manager |
| Anke van der Sterren | Senior Researcher and Project Manager |
| Julie Robert | Communications and Project Officer |
| Jeanette Bruce | Operations Officer and Office Manager |
| Lisa Alleva | Data and Project Manager |
| Annie Bleeker | Senior Training Specialist |
| Mark McKey | Senior Administrator |

ATODA would also like to acknowledge the consultancy, IT, finance, training, legal and design support from:

- Blue Arc IT Solutions
- Candlelight Pictures
- Mr David McDonald (Social Research & Evaluation)
- Gil-Jones Barker Solicitors
- GoHosting
- Hide & Seek Media
- Lee Jackson Design
- Lesley Porroj
- MCS Audit
- Ms Rebecca Vassarotti
- Uniting ReGen
- YellowEdge

Full, Associate and Individual Members

- ACT Shelter Association
- Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services
- 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
- 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
- Toora Women Inc
- Volunteering ACT
- Wellways Australia Limited
- Woden Community Service
- Youth Coalition of the ACT

Funders, Supporters, Partners and Collaborators

Funders and Supporters

- ACT Health Directorate
- Department of Health, Australian Government
- Local Drug Action Teams, Australian Drug Foundation
- The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Members of ATODA

Partners and Collaborators

- 360Edge
- ACT Corrective Services
- ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS)
- ACT Greens
- ACT Health Directorate
- ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee
- ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate
- ACT Labor
- ACT Policing
- ACT Shelter
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services
- Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania (ATDC)

- Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies Northern Territory (AADANT)
- Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol & other Drugs
- Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian Illicit and Injecting Drug Users League
- Australian National University
- Ms Roslyn Brown—Ngunnawal Elder
- Professor Lorana Bartels, Criminology Program Leader, Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods
- Dr David Caldicott - Emergency Consultant at the Emergency Department of the Calvary Hospital Canberra, Clinical Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine at the Australian National University
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA)
- Canberra Health Services
- Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT)
- Canberra Liberals
- Canberra Recovery Services, The Salvation Army
- Candlelight Pictures
- Capital Chemist Dickson
- Capital Chemist Tuggeranong Square
- Capital Chemist University of Canberra
- Capital Health Network
- Carers ACT
- Mr Richard Cash—360Edge
- CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
- Centre for Social Research Methods, Australian National University
- Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research (CYSAR)
- Chemist on Northbourne
- Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development
- Rt Hon. Helen Clark—Global Commission on Drug Policy, Former Prime minister of New Zealand
- Consumer representatives
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment
- Department of Health
- Department of Social Services
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Develin's City Chemist
- Directions Health Services
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- Drug Policy Modelling Program, University of New South Wales
- Drug Trends Program, National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre
- Erindale Pharmacy
- Families ACT
- Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc
- Fanforce Films
- Ms Meegan Fitzharris MLA, Minister for Health and Wellbeing
- The Hon. Geoff Gallop—Global Commission on Drug Policy, Former Premier of Western Australia
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT
- Health Improvements Projects, Preventive and Population Health,

- ACT Health Directorate
- Health Protection Service, ACT Health Directorate
- Health Services Planning, ACT Health Directorate
- Hepatitis ACT
- Hepatitis Australia
- Hide & Seek Media
- Dr Caitlin Hughes, Drug Policy Modelling Program, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW
- Interchange Health Co-op
- Ms Linda Jenner—360Edge
- Karralika Programs Inc.
- Lee Jackson Design
- Legislation, Policy & Programs, Justice and Community Safety Directorate
- Professor Nicole Lee—360Edge
- Professor Desmond Manderson, Professor in Law and the Humanities, Australian National University
- Mr David McDonald
- Mental Health Commission WA
- Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
- Mental Health Foundation ACT
- Meridian
- Mr Fred Monaghan—Ngunnawal Elder
- National Alliance for Action on Alcohol
- National AOD Coalition
- National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)
- National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA)
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales (NDARC)
- National Drug Research Institute (NDRI)
- Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (NADA)
- NSW / ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance
- Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Office for the Coordinator General for Family Safety, Community Services Directorate
- Office for Women, Community Services Directorate
- Dr Anna Olsen - Research School of Population Health, Australian National University
- Optimal Pharmacy Plus Jamison
- Mr Michael Pegg
- Pharmasave Woden Pharmacy
- Preventive and Population Health, ACT Health Directorate
- Public Health Association of Australia
- Professor Alison Ritter, Drug Policy Modelling Program, NDARC, University of New South Wales
- Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (QNADA)
- Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA - Minister for Corrections
- School of Sociology, Australian National University
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
- Mrs Agnes Shea OAM—Ngunnawal Elder
- Social Research and Evaluation
- South Australian Network for Drug and Alcohol Agencies (SANDAS)
- St John Ambulance ACT
- Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA - Minister for Health

- Ted Noffs Foundation
- The Connection
- Toora Women Inc
- Uniting
- Uniting Care ReGen
- University of Adelaide
- University of Canberra
- Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
- Volunteering ACT
- Ms Selina Walker—Australian Indigenous leader from Ngunnawal Country
- Wellways Australia Limited
- Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA)
- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services
- Women’s Centre for Health Matters
- YellowEdge
- Your Discount Chemist, Griffith
- Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Year in Review

The ‘Year in Review’ in this annual report maintains a focus on the capacity building, sector and workforce development, resources and support activities of ATODA (which are the funded activities). Some examples of policy activities are also highlighted.

For further information, please visit www.atoda.org.au

1. Evidence-informed AOD policy development, public discussion and priority setting

Support innovation and expertise and AOD policy development

The Canberra Drug Policy Series

Building on its previous success, the Canberra Drug Policy Series continued to bring international speakers, cutting-edge ideas and stimulating conversations about drug policy to our city. ATODA worked with Uniting and the ANU School of Sociology for this Series.

Four events were held culminating with the last event having over 36,000 online views. The events held were:

What everyone needs to know about Cannabis legislation in the ACT: A conversation with Professor Beau Kilmer

Held at the Shine Dome on 23 July 2019, this invited the audience to look beyond the binary of illegal vs legal and into a discussion of the different models of cannabis legalisation and what Canberra’s path to legalising personal cannabis use could look like, and what were the mistakes to avoid.

Canberra Book Launch: Pills, Powder and Smoke - A drug policy conversation with Antony Loewenstein

Held at the Shine Dome on 12 September 2019, this event showcased Loewenstein's latest book *Pills, Powder and Smoke: Inside the Bloody War on Drugs* revealing how the war on drugs has become the deadliest war in modern times.

Canberra Premiere of the Wild Butterfly Documentary

Held at Dendy Cinema Canberra on 10 March 2020, this event co-hosted by ATODA presented the *Wild Butterfly* dramatised documentary that explores childhood trauma and its relationship to ongoing mental health issues, drug use and hepatitis.

Achieving drug policy reform: Lessons from COVID-19 – A Conversation with the Global Commission on Drug Policy

Held online on 10 April 2019, this event showcased Australia's leadership through its COVID-19 public health response and the lessons we can take for drug policy reform in Australia.

All events included the voices of affected communities and others experts including:

- Rt Hon. Helen Clark—Global Commission on Drug Policy, Former Prime minister of New Zealand
- The Hon. Geoff Gallop, Global Commission on Drug Policy, Former Premier of Western Australia
- Dr Alison Ritter, AO, Director of Australia's Drug Policing Modelling Program
- Ms Selina Walker, Australian Indigenous leader from Ngunnawal Country
- Mr Chris Gough, Executive Director, Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA)
- Ms Annie Bleeker, Senior Training Specialist, Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association (ATODA)
- Professor Lorana Bartels, Criminology Program Leader, Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods
- Mr Michael Pettersson, MLA, Australian Capital Territory
- Professor Desmond Manderson, Professor in Law and the Humanities, Australian National University
- Dr David Caldicott, Emergency Consultant at the Emergency Department of the Calvary Hospital Canberra, Clinical Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine at the Australian National University
- Dr Anna Olsen, Senior Lecturer in the Medical School, Australian National University
- Ms Carrie Fowlie, CEO, Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; and strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations
- Strategic Outcome: evidence-informed practice and innovation

Prioritising people who use drugs and AOD services in emergency and public health responses

Bushfires and Hazardous Smoke

The smoke and bushfire conditions during the summer of 2019/20 had lasting impacts on people accessing specialist AOD services, and the workforce and services that support them. In acknowledgement of the challenging operating environment, the Executives of specialist ACT AOD services convened in early January 2020 to progress priorities and share information on responses to the bushfire crisis, particularly in terms of providing support for clients and staff and preparing their services. ATODA undertook significant representation on behalf of the sector in relation to:

- Obtaining an allocation of P2 masks from the ACT Government for distribution to AOD services.
- Identifying and communicating service impacts to funding bodies including in relation to purchasing of supplies; development of bushfire safety and business continuity planning; staffing disruptions; support for workforce wellbeing; and amendments to program delivery.
- Identifying and seeking resolutions to impacts on AOD service users, including lack of prioritisation of people with AOD issues in emergency responses; disruption of access to essential medicines including opioid maintenance therapy; and lack of adequate ACT and cross-border protocols.
- Providing AOD referral information and resources to staff and volunteers operating emergency response centres.

COVID-19

The impacts of COVID-19 on the specialist AOD service sector have been significant. ATODA re-focused much of its representation and policy work on COVID-19, particularly in relation to the following issues:

- People accessing AOD services are at heightened vulnerability to the impacts of COVID-19 and should therefore be prioritised in health system responses. This includes as a result of high rates of pre-existing health conditions; the need to maintain daily dosing of pharmacotherapy or prescriptions for hepatitis C treatment and access to sterile injecting equipment within the context of potential self isolation; respiratory issues associated with high smoking rates; and significant socio-economic and health inequities.
- The need for timely and focused activities on COVID-19 preparedness and outbreak management for NGO health services (rather than a focus only on the acute hospital system).
- Requirements for flexible contracting and reporting arrangements for services.
- The need for confirmation that AOD services are deemed 'essential services'.
- Allocation of COVID-19 stimulus funding to specialist AOD services.
- The need for timely information, strategies and protocols specific to health service preparations in the ACT (specialist AOD services are a critical part of the health system likely to have a high volume of interactions with vulnerable services users).
- The identification of a central contact point in ACT Health for communications in relation to COVID-19 for AOD services.
- The need for timely information, including to communicate with service users, about protocols for the continued provision of AOD services. In particular, the continuation of

pharmacotherapy in the case that people may be required to self-isolate, protocols for withdrawal supports and tele-counselling services.

- The urgent need for infection control materials including hand sanitizer, masks etc.
- The impact of capacity reductions in the AOD service system that have occurred as a consequence of the need to comply with COVID-19 social distancing. This is occurring in the context of the ACT AOD service system being unable to meet demand prior to COVID-19.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain the capacity of the sector and a highly skilled workforce
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Collaborative health services planning, needs assessment and fit-for-purpose contracting

Territory Wide Health Services Framework and AOD Services Planning

ATODA has long advocated for the development of a co-designed Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan for the ACT that is funder- and provider-neutral. Recently, this has included engagement with the ACT Health Directorate Health Services Planning Team tasked with updating the Territory-wide Health Services Plan. ATODA provided multiple briefings and written advice to the ACT Health Directorate in line with the following key messages:

- The ACT AOD service system is a specialist sub-sector of the health system, requiring appropriate investments in planning and infrastructure akin to other parts of the health system.
- The alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector is ready for, and wants, an alcohol and other drug services plan. There is a strong evidence base for alcohol and other drug treatment. The ACT alcohol and other drug service system is mature and well-mapped. There are a range of ACT data sources to inform health services plan, the majority of which have been co-designed with the sector:
 - service system map
 - workforce profile
 - mapping of all interventions delivered in the ACT against the evidence base
 - service-level data
 - population-level data
 - surveillance data
 - measurement of outcomes for service users
 - quality framework
 - Drug and Alcohol Services Planning Model (DASPM, formerly the DA-CCP)
- All specialist AOD intervention types are funded from multiple sources. Any investment, disinvestment, redistribution and/or redesign needs to be carefully considered, as it could have an adverse effect on the viability of the alcohol and other drug service system as a whole.
- The viability of the alcohol and other drug service system is at risk owing to historical and chronic underfunding; the system being full and unable to meet current demand;

and an infrastructure crisis with infrastructure that is ageing and in some instances not fit-for-purpose.

Planning for the alcohol and other drug service system should be funder and provider neutral. No one current service provider should be preferenced over another to provide input to Territory-wide planning processes.

Equal Remuneration Order

ATODA, alongside our peak colleagues, continues to undertake significant advocacy related to the impending cessation of the Equal Remuneration Order supplement in ACT Health and Commonwealth contracts. The potential funding shortfall for the specialist ACT AOD service system will have implications for workforce retention, service capacity and ultimately delivery of AOD services to Canberrans.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise; and maintain and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drug peak body
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Embedding and advocating for evidence in drug policy development

Adult Drug and Alcohol Court

The ACT Government committed to establishing a Drug and Alcohol Court (now the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List) in the Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Assembly. ATODA undertook initial treatment-demand modelling and initial benchmarking with specialist alcohol and other drug services in September and October 2019. ATODA remains concerned that the funding made available in the 2019-2020 ACT Budget is not sufficient to provide the drug treatment required for the number of planned participants in 2020-2021, and therefore, it will not create a sufficient net increase in treatment capacity in the service system. ATODA has continued to provide advice and guidance in relation to a number of key points:

- The need for sufficient and specific funding to provide drug treatment in its entirety to Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List participants in 2020-2021. Both infrastructure and treatment need to be funded. As at 30 June 2020 the current allocation is for treatment only, and it is not sufficient for planned participants going forward.
- The establishment of appropriate governance mechanisms to monitor and provide oversight for the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List.
- Ensuring that the impacts on the specialist alcohol and other drug service system are included as a key element of the evaluation of the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List.
- Mitigating against considerable risk for cost-shifting between the criminal justice and health system.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Other policy highlights

NGO Leadership Group

The Non-Government Organisation Leadership Group was established in response to the March 2019 findings of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services. ATODA's CEO was the inaugural co-chair of the Group, with the first meeting held in October 2019. The Group:

- Aims to enhance the quality of strategic policy development and service planning in the ACT with a particular focus on the delivery of health services by non-government organisations and their coherence with the ACT health system as a whole;
- Is a mechanism to share strategic advice and operates at a whole-of-system level and to an annual workplan; and
- Is a collaboration between ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and the NGOs funded by the ACT Health Directorate to deliver or support the delivery of health services.

In response to COVID-19, meeting frequency was increased to weekly with a focus on identifying and monitoring actions related to COVID-19 preparations for NGO health services.

Submission to the ACT Government Budget Consultation

ATODA, in consultation with stakeholders, made its annual submission to the ACT Budget consultation process for 2020-2021. The submission highlighted the ongoing ACT AOD policy and service delivery challenges, including calls for investment in the following priorities:

- Double the funding for the ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector.
- Undertake an urgent co-designed infrastructure audit of the *entire* specialist alcohol and other drug service system to inform infrastructure needs in the immediate-, short-, medium- and long-term. Develop an infrastructure implementation plan for the specialist alcohol and other drug service system that is informed by the infrastructure audit, as well as an infrastructure implementation plan specifically for the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List for the total expected number of participants.
- Ensure sufficient and specific funding to provide drug treatment in its entirety to Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List participants in 2020-2021, which is monitored and

tracked with oversight by a collaborative governance mechanism, and ensure that the impacts on the specialist alcohol and other drug service system are included as a key element of the evaluation of the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List.

Engagements and consultation with the sector, stakeholders and global leaders in drug law reform related to the ACT's January 2020 partial legalisation of cannabis

On 25 September 2019 the Legislative Assembly for the ACT enacted the *Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019* (ACT) (the Act). The amended legislation partially legalises the use, possession and cultivation of small amounts of cannabis for personal use by those aged 18 years and over, while maintaining the current legislative provisions for those under 18 years of age. Changes came into effect on 31 January 2020.

Building on submissions made in the previous year, ATODA provided representation and briefings on the proposed legislation in relation to: the current cannabis decriminalization scheme; Canberra public opinion on cannabis legalization; Commonwealth legislation; guidance material to help in interpreting the new cannabis legislation; access to appropriate expertise; the need for communications for the AOD sector and the public; and evaluation.

ATODA considers it crucial that specialist AOD workers understand the changes to personal cannabis use legislation in the ACT to support accurate communication with people who use cannabis, their families and communities. In response to this, ATODA coordinated a forum for ACT AOD workers in relation to changes to the ACT cannabis laws, including with presentations from representatives from the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and ACT Health Directorate.

Informing the development of the National Treatment Framework

Building on consultations in the previous year, ATODA made a submission to the public consultation on the National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment 2019-29 related to the following recommendations:

1. Recommending that the Framework provide an aim, clarify its audiences, strengthen the health framing of the document, and make the principles alcohol and other drug specific
2. Strengthening the description and contextualisation of the current Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment System
3. Strengthening workforce planning and development
4. Clarifying governance, Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Framework was released in December 2019 and provides:

- A framework for understanding the Australian treatment service system
- Principles for effective treatment
- Principles for effective treatment planning, purchasing and resourcing
- Principles for effective monitoring, evaluation and research
- Partnerships needed for a successful alcohol and other drug treatment service system

2. Supporting high quality specialist ATOD services

Building on innovative approaches to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence in ATOD settings

Safer Families AOD Baseline Assessment Project

In 2019, ATODA worked in partnership with 360Edge who were engaged by the ACT Health Directorate to undertake an assessment of the domestic and family violence (DFV) capabilities of ACT specialist alcohol and other drug services.

The project was intended to assist specialist AOD services to reflect on their current capabilities to respond to service users experiencing or using domestic and family violence. The project used the Domestic and Family Violence Capability Assessment Tool (DFV CAT), which was developed by the ACT ATOD sector in 2017, to conduct assessments of DFV response capabilities in ten AOD programs across the range of specialist AOD services.

The project provided participating programs with detailed feedback on their current DFV response capabilities and provided recommendations for enhancing these capabilities in line with their service types and scopes of practice. A sector-level report to the ACT Health Directorate also provided recommendations on potential measures to enhance sector-wide DFV response capabilities.

The resources developed during the 2017 AOD Safer Families Program, including the Domestic and Family Violence Capability Assessment Tool (DFV CAT), are available at <https://www.atoda.org.au/dfvtools/>

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation

Skills development and training

AOD and harm reduction training

ATODA engaged with allied sectors to provide tailored and subsidised training on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) and harm reduction. The one-day training course covered information about values and attitudes, ATOD use in the ACT and Australia, updated information about the harms and effects of ATOD as well as harm reduction approaches to use with clients. Participants were also provided with information about screening and brief intervention, referral, and ATOD support and treatment services in the ACT. Training sessions were tailored to meet the needs of its specific target audience.

Partnerships continued with peak bodies—Youth Coalition of the ACT, ACT Shelter and the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT—to support implementation of training within allied sectors. Partnerships also continued with service providers, including: Companion House; the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS); ACT Together; and the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA). These partnerships resulted in the delivery of six tailored ATOD Harm Reduction training sessions provided to 93 workers from 24 different agencies in the ACT. A further five trainings were scheduled for delivery between March-June 2020, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the declaration of a State of Emergency in the ACT on 16 March, five of the six training sessions were postponed to the 2020/21 financial year.

Participants' professional roles consisted of outreach workers; residential workers; school nurses; teachers; school administrators; mental health and homelessness workers; police; high school and generalist youth workers; and team leaders. All participants reported that they thought the training provided was either excellent (65%) or good (35%). Positive feedback was received from participants in all six trainings that were conducted in 2019/20. There was a high degree of satisfaction reported by participants in the training evaluation form. Over 90% 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-four percent of participants reported that they had increased their confidence and skills in working with people with ATOD issues.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: an evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Implementing evidence-based screening and brief intervention

[ACT electronic Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test \(ACT eASSIST\)](#)



The banner features the ATODA logo (Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT) at the top center. Below the logo, the text reads "ACT electronic Alcohol, Smoking & Substance Involvement Screening Test [ACT eASSIST]". At the bottom, there are two orange buttons: "Access ACT eASSIST online" with an upward arrow icon, and "Download ACT eASSIST" with a downward arrow icon.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) eASSIST provides a questionnaire which screens for all levels of problem or risky substance use. The ACT eASSIST provides an evidence based structured and consistent way for health, community and other workers to:

- > Identify if a client / consumer is experiencing alcohol, tobacco or other drug problems
- > Determine the level of risk of this use to help decide the next steps to take
- > Provide a structured 10 step brief intervention and accurate alcohol, tobacco and other drug information (including through prompts)
- > Produce a feedback report card for clients / consumers regarding the risks associated with their alcohol, tobacco or other drug use
- > Identify an appropriate ACT referral point for specialist alcohol, tobacco or other drug treatment and support.

Training and support to implement the ACT eASSIST is available from the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA).

For more information on the ACT eASSIST contact ATODA on:

Phone: (02) 6249 6358 / (02) 6257 2661

Visit: 11 Rutherford Crescent, Ainslie, ACT

Web: www.atoda.org.au

For more information on ACT alcohol, tobacco and other

drug referral options visit the ACT ATOD Services

Directory at: www.directory.atoda.org.au

ATODA continues to strengthen evidence-based and consistent alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) screening and brief interventions across health and community services in the ACT. This includes maintaining 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. 680 people visited the ACT eASSIST website to download or use the ACT eASSIST (www.act-eassist.org.au)

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.

ATODA, in partnership with the WHO Collaborating Centre (University of Adelaide) co-hosted three half day trainings on the ACT eASSIST. A total of 22 ACT community service workers and school nurses were trained in how to use the screening tool with their clients. All those who attended the ASSIST training had completed the ATOD Harm Reduction training which is a prerequisite for this training.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: an evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Further strengthening our evidence-based and professional workforce

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 Remaining Units (non ATOD content of 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 a partnership with Uniting Care ReGen.

A total of 42 scholarships were provided in this financial year including 12 participants who completed training for the AOD Skill Set and 30 for First Aid.

The training delivery also includes the provision of multiple student support days and information sessions for participants and managers.

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



This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Improving awareness of, and referrals to, specialist ACT AOD services

[ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services Online Directory:](http://www.directory.atoda.org.au)
www.directory.atoda.org.au

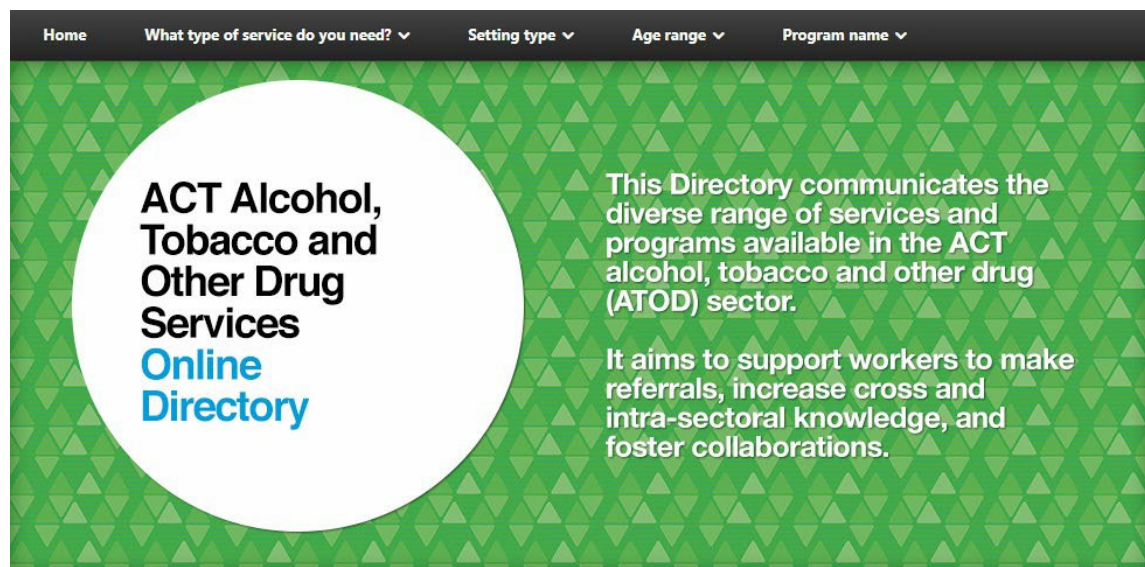
The ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services Online Directory (the Directory) communicates the diverse range of services and programs available in the sector. It aims to support workers to make referrals, increase cross- and intra-sectoral knowledge, and foster collaborations.

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 a point-in-time update of the Directory to document modifications to the operations of specialist AOD services necessitated by the COVID-19 situation.

In the last year, the Directory had over 11,000 visitors with 21,317 pages viewed.



This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priority: strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and improved health and reduced drug related harm

Supporting service and worker involvement in governance, capacity building and policy development

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
- Undertaking updates (including COVID-19 specific updates) of the ACT ATOD Services Directory
- Identifying issues experienced by clients, workers and services due to the COVID-19 situation and identifying appropriate actions
- Providing guidance and advice to the development of proposals through submission processes regarding sector priorities

Workers Group members are:

- Alcohol and Drug Services, Canberra Health Services
- Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT
- AOD Program, Gagan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- AOD Program, Toora Women Inc.
- AOD Program, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services
- AOD Programs, CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
- Canberra Recovery Services, The Salvation Army
- 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.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation

Specialist ACT ATOD Executives Meetings

A meeting of specialist ACT alcohol and other drug service Executives was convened at least monthly to support 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 to attend an Executives Group meeting. The Group had both an operational and a treatment 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.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harms

3. Supporting the availability and sharing of information about and for the ACT ATOD sector

Informing and educating members and stakeholders

ACT ATOD Sector eBulletins

The ACT ATOD Sector eBulletin provides summaries of information, important developments, events, reporting on ATODA projects, 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 including workers, researchers, and policy makers. Over the year 21 editions were disseminated to subscribers.

Research eBulletin

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

The Research eBulletin's evidence summaries are 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. Those that were promoted in the last 12 months included:

- The health of detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre
- The ACT and implementation of evidence-based policies on drink driving deterrence
- Criminal justice responses relating to personal use and possession of illicit drugs
- The reach of the ACT's drug diversion programs, and barriers and facilitators to expansion
- Australian Burden of Disease Study 2015: data on substance use risk factor burden
- Needle Syringe Program National Minimum Data Collection
- Why aren't sufficient pharmacists supplying naloxone?

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

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation

Providing a central point for information

www.atoda.org.au

The ATODA website provides detailed information on the organisation, activities, projects, policy, publications about, and for, the ACT ATOD sector and allied stakeholders. The website also presents news and events happening in the sector.

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 constant popularity with an average of 600 monthly visits and over 1,380 pages viewed every month.

Update and Drug Talk Mailing Lists

Since the defunding of the Australian Drug Council of Australia (ADCA), ATODA has monitored and managed the Update and Drugtalk mailing lists. Over 670 people are subscribed to the lists.

The lists help subscribers stay informed of what is happening in the alcohol and other drugs sector, including keeping up to date with current events, research, news, job vacancies, publications and announcements. The lists also facilitate contact between those working in the sector and provide a forum in which people can seek information from a wide range of knowledge and expertise.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation

4. Research, collective impact and contributing to the evidence base

Working collaboratively to enhance workforce qualifications, remuneration and wellbeing

The ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Profile

The ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Profile aims to profile the specialist ATOD sector workforce in the ACT, and has occurred every three years since 2006. The fifth Profile was conducted in 2017 and involved administering a Workers' Survey (distributed to workers at each of the nine participating ACT specialist AOD organisations), and an Organisation Survey (completed by a manager or executive staff member from each participating specialist AOD organisation).

The profile informs a more detailed understanding of the sector, effective representation for the sector, future development needs and helps the sector to target current gaps in skills, knowledge and satisfaction. These findings can also be compared over time to the results from the previous surveys. For the first time in 2017, the survey also measured worker wellbeing, enabling an examination of how these wellbeing factors and other workforce issues interrelate. A supplement to the Workforce Profile provided a snapshot of smoking behaviours of workers in ACT specialist AOD services and their attitudes towards tobacco management activities within these services.

The profile report was released in 2019 as an ATODA monograph entitled: '[ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Profile 2017: Qualifications, Remuneration and Well-being](#)'. Other monographs in the series are available on the ATODA website www.atoda.org.au.

Findings of the supplementary tobacco module of the Workforce Profile were presented at the 2019 APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drug Conference: van der Sterren A, Fowlie C, Alleva L and Bode A. 'Smoking behaviours and attitudes towards tobacco management policy and practices of workers in specialist alcohol and other drug services in the ACT', poster presented at the APSAD Conference, Hobart, 10 – 13 November 2019.

This activity progresses ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcome: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system

Working collaboratively across ACT AOD services to enhance outcomes and satisfaction for AOD service users

Service Users Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey (SUSOS)

The 2018 Service Users Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey (SUSOS) was conducted on a single day in November 2018 at twenty-five sites at all ten specialist alcohol and drug treatment and support services in the ACT (both government and non-government services). A total of 621 people who accessed these programs on a single day completed the Survey. The SUSOS aims to improve service responsiveness to the needs of people accessing specialist AOD services in the ACT and to inform quality improvement programs in the participating specialist AOD services. To do this, the SUSOS seeks to:

- provide a demographic profile of the population of services users accessing AOD treatment and support services in the ACT, thereby pointing to the potential needs of the AOD treatment population
- investigate service users' experiences of accessing ACT publicly-funded specialist AOD services
- investigate the perspectives of service users of the quality of these AOD services by assessing their levels and patterns of satisfaction, and
- investigate self-reported outcomes as a result of using these AOD services.

The ACT SUSOS is the only jurisdiction-wide survey of satisfaction and outcomes of people accessing specialist AOD services in Australia. These surveys have been conducted in ACT specialist AOD services every three years since 2009. The results from 2018 will be published in July 2020 and available as an ATODA Monograph.

Findings from the 2018 SUSOS were presented at the 2019 APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drug Conference: van der Sterren A, Fowlie C, Alleva L and Bode A. 'Satisfaction and self-reported outcomes for service users of specialist alcohol and other drug treatment and support services in the ACT: implications of findings from the 2018 Service Users' Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey', poster presented at the APSAD Conference, Hobart, 10 – 13 November 2019.

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

Working collaboratively with other researchers to enhance and disseminate AOD research

In November 2019, ATODA hosted a presentation by researchers from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) on the ACT Drug Trends 2019 findings from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and the Ecstasy and Related Drug Reporting System (EDRS). The presentation was attended by workers, researchers and policy makers from the ATOD and related sectors.

During 2019, ATODA represented the national peaks as a member of the Project Reference Group for the National Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Survey conducted by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA). The survey was conducted in the ACT between September 2019 and February 2020, and the national results of the survey are to be released in the second half of 2020.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: promote non-stigmatising and discriminatory language, policies, practice and research; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; and evidence-informed practice and innovation

5. Improving the Health of Canberrans

Implementing tobacco management activities

While the ACT's smoking rate is currently less than 10%, some sub-populations experiencing disadvantage have much higher rates. This includes people accessing alcohol and other drug services in the ACT— 77% of participants in the 2018 Service Users' Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey (SUSOS) self-reported that they were smokers when they first started using the specialist AOD service.

In order to meaningfully achieve lower smoking rates in the ACT, ATODA's projects and resources focus on providing nicotine dependence treatment and support to people accessing specialist AOD services.

We CAN Project - Communities Accessing all-types of Nicotine Replacement Therapy

The We CAN Program (Communities Accessing all-types of Nicotine Replacement Therapy) aims to reduce smoking among people utilising specialist alcohol and other drug (AOD) non-government services by providing subsidised access to all types of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) e.g. patches, gum, lozenges, spray, inhalator. AOD workers provide a

voucher to service users that is redeemable at a partnering community pharmacy for a full course (8 – 12 weeks) of all types of NRT. Service users concurrently receive smoking cessation support through the AOD workers and/or the pharmacies.

The Program enables best practice nicotine dependence treatment to be delivered to this population with extremely high smoking rates, and for this treatment to be implemented as part of routine AOD treatment and support within specialist AOD services. The Program:

- targets a priority population with very high smoking rates—i.e. people who access specialist AOD services;
- takes a settings-based approach, (i.e. delivering the Program in non-government specialist AOD services);
- enables delivery of best practice nicotine dependence treatment—full courses of combination NRT, complemented by specialist smoking cessation support
- is implemented as part of routine AOD treatment and support—thereby increasing smoking cessation, and improving AOD treatment outcomes
- leverages and enhances specialist AOD services' treatment and support expertise—including organisational tobacco management policies, and a trained workforce
- leverages on existing smoking cessation training and resources through ACT community pharmacies
- leverages ACT Health and the Commonwealth's existing specialist AOD treatment and support investment

The We CAN Program continues to be delivered in eight specialist AOD NGO services, including all residential services. Operating data from the Program shows a potentially high rate of quit attempts—the majority of participating service users provided with a NRT voucher follow through on redeeming these at the community pharmacies. Many of these service users are accessing sufficient NRT to make a quality quit attempt, particularly as indicated by the amount of NRT purchased and whether they purchased a combination of patches and intermittent forms of NRT. All participating service users also received smoking cessation support from a specialist AOD treatment and support worker and/or a pharmacist or pharmacy worker.

The We CAN Program has demonstrated that people accessing specialist AOD services want to engage in smoking cessation. Best practice care, which includes full courses of subsidised NRT, should be provided as core business. ATODA continues to advocate for further funding to be provided for the community to access subsidised NRT to meet demand.



Nicotine Replacement Therapy for Workers Project

Throughout 2019-20, ATODA continued to offer access to subsidised nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to people who smoke who are ATOD, youth or mental health workers in the non-government, not for profit sector of the ACT and/or members of ATODA. This is to help them manage their tobacco consumption at work, engage with smoke-free environment policies, and support quit attempts at no cost to the individual employee.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harms

Providing resources for the community to prevent alcohol-related harm

Impact Alcohol

Impact Alcohol is a partnership between ATODA, ACT Health and the Western Australian Mental Health Commission. The project aims to reduce alcohol-related harms and ill health in the ACT and is supported by a website (www.impactalcohol.org.au). The website provides a range of resources and information related to alcohol, health, young adults and the community and is promoted through ATOD training programs provided to ACT ATOD and allied health sectors.

In addition to the on-line tools, ATODA liaised with the Western Australian Mental Health Commission to renew the licensing agreement for the website for a further three years, 2019–2022.

ATODA acknowledges the grant received from the Australian Drug Foundation Local Drug Action Teams Program to extend the licensing agreement.



Impact Alcohol website analytics

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, the Impact Alcohol website received 518 views from 221 users, including 218 new users, meaning that the vast majority of visitors to the website were

new visitors. There were peaks in views in November, December and January which could be related to the end of the school year and Christmas holiday period.

5-minute AUDIT Tool

The Alcohol Use Disorders Inventory Test (AUDIT) was added to the Impact Alcohol website. The AUDIT was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a simple method of screening for excessive drinking and to assist in brief assessment. It can help identify excessive drinking as the cause of the presenting illness and provides a framework for intervention to help risky drinkers reduce or cease alcohol consumption and thereby avoid the harmful consequences of their drinking. The AUDIT also helps to identify alcohol dependence and some specific consequences of harmful drinking. This was the most popular page accessed on the Impact Alcohol website in 2019/20.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations; and strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise
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University Drug and Alcohol Network

In 2019/20 ATODA partnered with the Australian National University (ANU), the University of Canberra (UC) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU) – ACT Diocese to establish a University Drug and Alcohol Network (UDAN). The UDAN aims 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 provided secretariat support to the UDAN Working Group which included Senior Staff in charge of Student Wellbeing at the three universities. Throughout the year ATODA delivered three AOD workshops to over 200 Student Leaders at ANU and UC which focused on prevention, harm reduction and help seeking.

ATODA also provided AOD and ASSIST screening and brief intervention training to 15 medical and counselling staff at UC to inform improved responses to AOD from health staff employed by the university. All workshops for students and staff were well received and resulted in increased knowledge and awareness of AOD related harms and skills to address risky drinking and harmful drug use amongst university students.

The UDAN partners valued establishing relationships with other ACT universities and ATODA and being able to access evidence-based research and policies to better respond to AOD use on campus.

ATODA acknowledges the grant received from the Australian Drug Foundation Local Drug Action Teams Program to implement the UDAN.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise; and strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations
- Strategic Outcomes: evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harms

6. ATODA in the media

ATODA regularly make public comment and/or facilitates the media to access experts to make public comments. ATODA engaged with various media outlets including the ABC, The Canberra Times and RiotACT. Various topics were covered including cannabis related arrests, cannabis law reform and the AOD treatment funding crisis.

7. Improving national advocacy, collaboration and coordination

Working collaboratively with the Australian AOD Peaks

State, Territory and National AOD Peaks

ATODA continues to work collaboratively with its sister peaks across Australian jurisdictions, as well as with the newly formed national AOD peak (the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council). Monthly meetings of the peaks' CEOs have led to a series of activities including:

- Meetings with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Branch in the Commonwealth Department of Health and relevant Ministers, including to provide representations in relation to impacts of COVID-19 on the AOD sector, the continuation of the Equal Remuneration Order, the introduction of CPI for Commonwealth contracts, and implementation of the National Quality Framework and National AOD Treatment Framework.
- Undertaking a joint survey on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AOD service delivery to inform representations.
- Monthly reports on the activities and policy priorities of jurisdictional AOD peaks to the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Peaks Capacity Building Network

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 role of the PCBN is to:

- Provide a centralised point for national coordination of capacity building activity

- Identify, advise and respond to national workforce/sector development requirements of the AOD sector in relation to the complex needs of clients and AOD services.
- Provide updates on state and territory initiatives relevant to the capacity building projects
- Share resources and leverage capacity, where practical.
- Provide a central contact point for communication with the Department of Health regarding capacity building activities across the country.
- Coordinate planning activities to identify shared priorities including those that could inform future resource allocation or tendering opportunities.

These activities progress ATODA's Strategic Plan

- Strategic Priorities: develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce; develop and maintain the capacity of the sector; strengthen the development and influence of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug expertise; and strengthen research, evaluation, policy, practice and participation collaborations
- Strategic Outcomes: a high quality and coherent workforce, services, sector and system; evidence-informed practice and innovation; and improved health and reduced drug related harms



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