



Alcohol, Tobacco and other  
Drugs Council Tasmania Inc.

# MEDIA RELEASE

June 1, 2017

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## Youths delay drinking, while more middle-aged Australians use illicit drugs

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania (ATDC) has welcomed fresh data detailing drug use in Australia.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey revealed the most common 'recently used' illegal drugs were cannabis and cocaine in Australia in 2016.

Recent use of meth/amphetamines decreased to a rate of 1.4 per cent, but the majority of meth/amphetamine users are predominantly using crystal methamphetamine, also known as ice.

About 17 per cent of people were drinking in quantities exceeding lifetime risk guidelines in 2016, the survey found.

"Alcohol remains the most commonly used drug, that came as no surprise to us," ATDC Chief Executive Officer Debra Rabe said.

"What people need to remember is that a very small proportion of our community uses crystal methamphetamine or 'ice' and we need not be scared of those people or judge them inappropriately. We need to extend our help to them and make sure that they know that there is hope for recovery and that treatment works."

The AIHW findings for 2016 revealed Australians aged under 30 smoke and drink less and take less illicit drugs, compared to in 2001.

Ms Rabe said the ATDC welcomed the household survey data, which is released every three years and is "the gold standard in extrapolating population trends".

"Our community organisations are quick to respond to differences in drug use patterns and the relation to demographic data," Ms Rabe said.

"This is because we are embedded and deeply connected to the communities we serve.

"This data will add to the evidence base and we will continue to provide programs that are responsive to the changing harms associated with drug use."

Ms Rabe said while state and territory data won't be released until later this year, "national trends are certainly very useful when finding out who is using what and the harm that eventuates".

"Historically Tasmanian trends have often reflected the national trends," she said.

The survey found that the average age Australians were first trying alcohol and cigarettes increased to about 16, up from about 14 in 1998, which Ms Rabe said is "positive". However, in 2016 more Australians in their 40s used illicit drugs compared to 2013, the survey found. Ms Rabe described this finding as "a concern".

The ATDC is the peak body representing the interests of Tasmania's community service organisations that provide people with substance misuse issues services.

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