



Alcohol, Tobacco & other  
Drugs Council Tas Inc.

Submission to the  
Australian Government's

# *National Ice Taskforce*

May 2015

Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tas Inc. (ATDC)

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# The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council

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The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania (ATDC) is the peak body representing the interests of community sector organisations (CSOs) that provide services to people with substance misuse issues in Tasmania. The ATDC is a membership based, independent, not-for-profit and incorporated organisation.

The ATDC is the key body supporting the sector to secure adequate systemic support and funding for the delivery of evidence based alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) initiatives. We support the sector through training and sector capacity building, as well as undertaking policy and development projects with, and on behalf of, the sector.

We represent a broad range of service providers and individuals working in prevention, promotion, early intervention, treatment, case management, research and harm reduction.

We play a vital role in assisting the Tasmanian Government to achieve its aims of preventing and reducing harms associated with the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the Tasmanian community.

By working with all levels of government and the community the ATDC seeks to promote health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians through a reduction of the harms caused by substance use. Our priorities are set by the membership and Board and focus on the prevention of the uptake of harmful alcohol or drug use, the provision of effective treatment for alcohol or drug misuse and the long term promotion of health and relapse prevention.

A broad and regionally dispersed membership base ensures the ATDC maintains a strategically relevant position within the overall understanding of what services are provided, what services are needed and how best to achieve the goal of reducing the negative impacts on the Tasmanian community from alcohol and drug use.

## Our Vision

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A Tasmania without drug or alcohol related harm or discrimination.

## Our Mission

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To provide independent leadership and advocacy; strengthen partnerships through inclusion, and support consumer participation in the promotion of holistic alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) services for all Tasmanians.

## Our Goals

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Goal 1: To provide effective leadership and representation for the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector.

Goal 2: To build sustainability of the ATDC and the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector.

Goal 3: To maximise consumer engagement in service planning and delivery.



## Introduction

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The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a short written submission to the National Ice Taskforce. The ATDC has also been fortunate to participate in two formal stakeholder consultations conducted by the Taskforce during May 2015.

This submission provides information about the Tasmanian alcohol, tobacco and other drugs service system, makes a number of observations and suggestions regarding alcohol and drug related issues and broadly responds to the questions posed by the Taskforce:

- What is the impact of people using ice on our community?
- Where should federal, state and territory governments focus their efforts to combat the use of ice?
- Are there any current efforts to combat the use of ice that are particularly effective or that could be improved?
- What are the top issues that the National Ice Taskforce should consider when developing the National Ice Action Strategy?

## Overview of the Tasmanian ATOD Service System

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There are 12 Tasmanian community sector organisations funded by the State Government to provide specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug programs (including the ATDC as the peak body).

The community sector plays a major role in the delivery of specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) prevention, treatment and harm reduction interventions. In addition the sector works closely with a range of other providers across government and private providers to ensure interventions are appropriately targeted and effective. These interventions include:

- residential rehabilitation programs
- non-medical sobering up facilities and places of safety
- smoking cessation
- counselling and support
- health promotion, education and training
- youth specific services
- advocacy
- care coordination
- needle and syringe program
- illicit drug diversion assessment, brief intervention and counselling.

The Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Directorate located within the Department of Health and Human Services is the key area within the Tasmanian State Government that is responsible for alcohol and other drug policy.



The Alcohol and Drug Service (ADS) operates at a statewide level within the Tasmanian public health system. ADS provides treatment and support services to individuals and families. The service provides a variety of programs, interventions and treatment services which include:

- Opioid Pharmacotherapy Program
- Inpatient Withdrawal Management Unit
- Psychosocial Interventions Program
- Smoking Cessation Program
- Consultation Liaison Service (South) based at the Royal Hobart Hospital
- Youth Program.

## A System-wide Response

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The ATDC recognises the invaluable role played by law enforcement agencies in illicit drug seizures and arrests. These agencies play a vital role in minimising harm to individuals and communities by reducing the supply of illicit drugs. The ATDC is principally concerned with the services within the alcohol and other drugs sector.

If Australia is to respond to the crystalline methamphetamine (and other drugs) issues then a carefully considered approach is required to ensure an adequate and balanced investment across the spectrum of services:

- primary prevention
- early intervention
- education
- community development
- treatment and rehabilitation
- law enforcement
- justice.

## Sustained Investment in Services

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Services and programs within the alcohol and other drug community sector are often subject to the vagaries of Commonwealth and state/territory government funding cycles and reviews. This funding uncertainty jeopardises ongoing service delivery and impacts on staff retention. Ultimately the lack of funding security impacts on the type and level of services that are available to the community. Longer term funding with simpler contractual reporting arrangements would benefit government, community sector organisations and consumers.

To address crystalline methamphetamine and other drug use within the community the ATDC highlights the need for increased investment in treatment services across the state. Many of the services already available for alcohol and drug detoxification and treatment are suitable and appropriate for crystalline methamphetamine treatment and rehabilitation.



The ATDC supports an equal and significant focus on health promotion, preventative health and early intervention, alongside more acute treatment service provision. Adequate investment in promotion, prevention and early intervention is key to addressing alcohol and drug use within Australia.

## Service Coordination and Integration

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The alcohol and other drug sector fosters inter-professional working relationships, and AOD workers are experienced at working in collaboration and in partnership with other service providers.

The treatment services sector needs to be enabled with mechanisms that support and strengthen collaborative practice and service coordination such as:

- streamlined pathways and referral systems between services
- shared clinical and client information management systems
- workforce development and professional up-skilling
- information technology and information management.

## Training and Capacity Building

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In October 2014 the Tasmanian State Government Department of Health and Human Services released the *Final Report of the Review of Drug Use and Service Responses in North West Tasmania*. The report made a number of observations and recommendations about alcohol and other drug services within the North West and across Tasmania. The first recommendation contained within the Report related to the delivery of amphetamine-type stimulant education and training, with an emphasis on methamphetamine use, in order to immediately up-skill frontline service providers including those working in the alcohol and other drugs sector. The ATDC has been funded to coordinate the provision of initial training which will occur in early July 2015. Demand indicates that the workers within the alcohol and other drugs sector, housing and homelessness sector, mental health sector, health and community services sectors, have a strong desire to gain and insight into how to better respond to client presentations associated with crystalline methamphetamine.

## Data and Research

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The ATDC is a strong proponent of services and interventions being evidence-based. Data and information associated with the availability, seizure and use of drugs within Australia is collected and reported by a myriad of organisations such as law enforcement agencies, research institutes, community sector organisations, hospitals and government departments amongst others. It is essential that the right information is collected and analysed so that the entire service system is adequately funded and that intervention and outcomes are evaluated. All too frequently government policy and investment decisions are made based upon conjecture and/or anecdote.

## Stigmatisation

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The way that drug users and drug use are portrayed in the media can have negative consequences on individuals and cause them to be stigmatised and discriminated against. Whilst the government may not be able to control all of the messaging and imagery that is used in relation to methamphetamine and other drug use it is important that advertisements and public marketing campaigns:

- consider the way people are portrayed and the potential harms that may be done
- ensure that key messages are based on facts
- carefully consider the target audience/s for messages and that appropriate language is used
- consider the formats to appeal to different audiences
- do not glamorise or sensationalise drug taking
- are monitored and evaluated.

## Drug User Engagement

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The ATDC believes that robust and inclusive community and drug user engagement mechanisms are a fundamental aspect of the development and delivery of alcohol and other drug sector services. The unique perspective of drug users is key to providing appropriate support services and to developing targeted prevention and early intervention strategies.