

MEDIA RELEASE

The ATDC does not support the proposal of drug-tests for welfare recipients

Friday, 6 September 2019

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania has expressed its concerns regarding the Australian Government's attempts to reintroduce a trial of drug tests for Australian welfare recipients.

While the proposed trial would not be delivered in Tasmania, ATDC chief executive Alison Lai said that the premise was highly troubling.

"The concept of requiring welfare recipients to undertake drug testing is a proposal that was presented by the Australian Government in 2017, and the national out-cry on this approach has not changed since that time," Ms Lai said.

"The concerns raised two years ago remain the same today, including the potential impact on vulnerable families if an individual's financial support is decreased or denied.

"There remain concerns of unintended consequences for those who may be dependent on illicit substances who may choose to use different illicit drugs that may not be detectable or turn to prescription medications, increasing their risk of harm.

"Strategies like this are believed to have the potential to push individuals into crime in order to support themselves or their families, and there are significant costs associated with administering a drug testing regime like they are proposing that could deliver the desired accuracy and reliability.

"There is also uncertainty surrounding how to protect an individual's right to privacy, appeal processes for positive results and the use of testing results by other government departments that might impact a person's life in other ways like child custody arrangements.

"We are concerned it will only increase the level of stigma currently attached to individuals who may be experiencing issues with substance use and also any member of the public who is receiving welfare benefits.

"Problematic alcohol and other drug use is a health issue.

"The approach being proposed is not an evidence-informed health response and it is not one that our organisation supports."

[ENDS]

Media Contact: Alison Lai, CEO – 0450 517 017





No Harm, No Discrimination

Suite 1, Level 1, 175 Collins Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000
PO Box 4702 Bathurst Street PO, Hobart TAS 7000
9am – 5pm Monday to Friday | P 03 6231 5002
E admin@atdc.org.au | atdc.org.au

Who are the ATDC? The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania is the peak body representing and supporting community organisations, and the people they assist, to reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harm for all Tasmanians.

Our vision is a Tasmania without alcohol, tobacco or other drug related harm or discrimination.

LANGUAGE MATTERS – Language is powerful, especially when discussing alcohol and other drugs and the people who use them. Stigmatising language reinforces negative stereotypes. “Person-centred” language focuses on the person, not their substance use.

When reporting on people who use alcohol and other drugs....	
Try this 	Not this 
Substance use, non-prescribed use	Abuse, misuse, problem use, non-compliant use
Person who uses drugs	Drug user, drug abuser
Person with a dependence on....	Addict, junkie, druggie, alcoholic
Person experiencing drug dependence	Suffering from addiction, has a drug habit
Person who has stopped using drugs	Clean, sober, drug-free
Person with lived experience of drug dependence	Ex-addict, former addict, used to be a...
Please see the attached Language matters resource attached or at: www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/	



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