

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Strengthening Tasmania's justice response to problematic alcohol and other drug use

Thursday, 19 September 2019

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania has today released its position statement outlining its recommendations on how the Tasmanian Government can strengthen its current justice response to problematic drug use in the community.

ATDC chief executive Alison Lai said that the list of recommendations were very pragmatic, and focused on strengthening the existing programs the Tasmanian Government currently delivers.

"We know that in 2017-2018 almost 2700 Tasmanians were arrested for drug-related offences, and more than 80 per cent of these arrests (2196) were for use or possession of a drug for their own personal use," Ms Lai said.

"Some of these Tasmanians will be offered suspended sentences, others will be required to spend time in prison, yet we know that only a very small proportion of these people will be provided with treatment options to address their alcohol or other drug use issues.

"A very small cohort will be eligible for a limited place in Tasmania's Court Mandated Diversion Program instead of going to jail, but this is currently only available to Tasmanians charged with illicit drug offences, not alcohol related offences.

"One of our key concerns is that those Tasmanians who do find themselves sentenced to a period in prison, directly or indirectly because of alcohol or other drugs, are currently unlikely to access adequate treatment or support due to significant under-resourcing within the custodial environment.

"Our concerns were confirmed in the release of the 2017 Custodial Inspector of Tasmania's Report into Care and Wellbeing that painted a grim picture of under-resourcing including only two alcohol and drug counsellors for over 670 prisoners (with a waiting list of 100 prisoners) and limited places available for opioid replacement therapy.

"Consequently, when they are released, their underlying alcohol or other drug issues typically remains unresolved, and it's the position of the ATDC that this needs to change."

Referring to their recommendations as 'pragmatic' and 'achievable', Ms Lai said that the recommendations were focused on ensuring that those Tasmanians with problematic drug use who find themselves in contact with the justice system have access to appropriate treatment and support.

"Our recommendations include increasing investment into Tasmania's Court Mandated Diversion Program and expanding it to also include problematic alcohol use, and it we are also calling for increased investment into alcohol and drug services within the Tasmanian Prison Service," she said.

"We acknowledge the Tasmanian Government has confirmed their commitment to reviewing the Court Mandated Diversion Program in 2020 and are also in the process of reviewing their strategies to tackle drug use within the prison.

"We welcome these discussions, but note that these processes take time and, in the meantime, invite the opportunity to work with the Tasmanian Government to identify and implement interim solutions to ensure that those Tasmanians who come in contact with our justice system have access to the services they require.



*No Harm, No Discrimination*

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**Summary of Recommendations:**

1. The ATDC calls for increased investment to strengthen Tasmania’s Court Mandated Diversion Program and expand the Program to include problematic alcohol use, including:
  - Reviewing the existing CMD Program model
  - Broadening the CMD Program’s criteria for ‘success’
  - Expand the CMD Program to include Drug Treatment Orders for problematic alcohol use
  - Review the legislation with consideration to increasing sentence eligibility in the Tasmanian Supreme Court from two to three years.
2. The ATDC calls for increased investment into alcohol and other drug treatment services within Tasmania’s correctional facilities.
3. The ATDC supports the introduction of a Therapeutic Division of the Tasmanian Magistrates Court.

[Click here to view the full position paper.](#)

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**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: <a href="http://www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/">www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/</a>	



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