

MEDIA RELEASE

Harm reduction has never been more important for the health of Tasmanians

COVID-19 actions to reduce the harms of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

Monday, 23 March 2020

Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council chief executive officer Alison Lai has applauded the Tasmanian alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector who have acted swiftly to put procedures in place to ensure the safety of their staff and clients.

"All our members are implementing additional health and safety precautions with many services continuing to provide face-to-face services, with others providing support over the phone, or via video-conference if appropriate," Mrs Lai said.

"Please be assured that alcohol, tobacco and other drug treatment services and programs continue to be available across Tasmania, and if someone is receiving treatment or if people know of someone who needs assistance or information, there is support available."

Seeking to work more closely with the Tasmanian Government, Mrs Lai says that they have provided a range of actions that they believe will reduce the harms of drug use in the community at this time.

1. Fast track legislation for life-saving overdose medication naloxone

"The amendment to the Tasmanian *Poisons Act 1971* has been finalised by the Department of Health to enable naloxone to be dispensed in non-pharmacy settings such as needle and syringe service sites. Fast-tracking Cabinet approval of this amendment will significantly reduce the risks of accidental overdose for vulnerable Tasmanians going into self-isolation or wishing to practice social distancing," Mrs Laid said.

2. Continued access to pharmacotherapy treatment for those in self-isolation

"Tasmanians who are receiving pharmacotherapy treatment currently need to present to a pharmacist or Alcohol and Drug Services on a daily basis. Immediate action to allow takeaway dosages must be considered where possible, particularly for pharmacists operating in rural Tasmania. Takeaway dosages of up to 28 days is common in other states and territories, and it is an approach supported by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (Tasmania). It is an option that can be easily implemented, and will ensure that the treatment regime of Tasmanians is not jeopardised if they are required to go into self-isolation, or if a pharmacist is required to close. The other option is to fast-track discussions on access to injectable medications that can last up to a month, which is also available in other parts of Australia. This would also be welcomed by pharmacists, but in the first instance allowing take-away dosages would be an effective measure," Ms Lai said.



No Harm, No Discrimination

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3. Alcohol, tobacco and other drug health information for the community

"We know that alcohol, tobacco and other drug use increases during times of community and individual concern and stress. It is essential that public health campaigns include information on managing drug-related health issues, and alongside our members including the Drug Education Network and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, we are ready to participate in public health discussions to ensure that this information is provided to the community," Mrs Lai said.

4. Responsible Service of Alcohol training for alcohol home delivery drivers

"We anticipate that over the next few months we are going to see a spike in the number of online alcohol sales, and the likely introduction of increased express deliveries [less than two hours] across the State. Currently the Tasmanian *Liquor Licencing Act 1990* does not require delivery drivers to have Responsible Service of Alcohol certifications like their brick and mortar counterparts. To ensure we are on the front-foot to minimise additional risk or harm from express alcohol deliveries, we are seeking to work with the Tasmanian Government and our members to coordinate RSA training for delivery drivers employed by licensed Tasmanian alcohol retailers, as a matter of high priority," Mrs Lai said.

The ATDC supports Premier Gutwein's comments today about the importance of ensuring Tasmanians are kept safe, and that their health and wellbeing is protected.

Harm reduction has never been more important for the health of Tasmania. We continue to assess what actions can be implemented, and we believe these actions will significantly reduce the harm of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in our community at this time.

-ENDS-

Media Contact: Alison Lai, CEO – 0450 517 017

Who are the ATDC?

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council 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.



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LANGUAGE MATTERS – Language is powerful, especially when discussing alcohol, tobacco 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 <i>Language matters</i> resource at: www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/	



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