

The Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence
(Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021
ACT Legislative Assembly
LASelectCommitteeDDAB2021@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) strongly supports the submission lodged by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Association (ATODA). WANADA recognises there are opportunities to further enhance the intended outcomes of the Bill and recognises the national precedent that this Bill offers.

The ACT's approach establishes a legislative regime which places drug use firmly within the public health domain, rather than being driven through criminal justice. This approach values the health and human rights of the individual and reflects a clear understanding of the factors that contribute to drug use and drug related harm.

The Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 reflects decades of research, international experience and Australian political inquiry. In prioritising a health focus, as opposed to a punitive approach, the Bill is congruent with, and builds upon, a recent inquiry in Western Australia: the Western Australian Select Committee Inquiry into alternate approaches to reducing illicit drug harm and its effects on the community (2018/19). The Committee, which comprised representatives from across the political spectrum, delivered a consensus report: *Help, Not Handcuffs: Evidence-Based Approaches to Reducing Harm from Illicit Drug Use*. Sample quotes from the report includeⁱ:

Most people who use drugs do so in an occasional, recreational way that does not adversely affect their lives or the community.

...harms are caused by the criminalisation of drug use or possession for personal use. A criminal record can affect employment, housing and educational opportunities. Prohibition also increases stigma, as people are less likely to seek help when they fear criminal action. These impacts can compound existing social disadvantage.

Australia has a history of progressing decriminalisation in many formsⁱⁱ; WANADA commends the ACT for building on this legacy.

Yours sincerely



Jill Rundle
CEO
WANADA
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About WANADA

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the specialist alcohol and other drug education, prevention, treatment and support sector in Western Australia. WANADA is an independent, membership-driven, not-for-profit association.

WANADA is driven by the passion and hard work of its member organisations, which include community alcohol and other drug counselling; therapeutic communities; residential rehabilitation; intoxication management; harm reduction; peer based; prevention; and community development services.

ⁱ Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community. (2019). Help, Not Handcuffs: Evidence-Based Approaches to Reducing Harm from Illicit Drug Use - Final Report of the Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community. Perth: Parliament of Western Australia, p.i.

ⁱⁱ Hughes, C., Ritter, A., Chalmers, J., Lancaster, K., Barratt, M. & Moxham-Hall, V. (2016). Decriminalisation of drug use and possession in Australia – A briefing note. Sydney: Drug Policy Modelling Program, NDARC, UNSW Australia.