CEO Communique #20 December 2025

These communiques provide a snapshot of the work the ATDC team are undertaking on behalf of the sector. Questions? Contact Jackie

ATDC Board 2025-26 – and new strategic plan 2026-2031!

As at the 2025 AGM our ATDC Board Directors are: Damian Collins (Chair), Emily Chase (Vice Chair), Matthew Devenish (Treasurer), Narelle Howell, Richard Salewicz and Abby Smith. Board and staff have been working through 2025 developing a new strategic plan that was endorsed by the Board at the November meeting. The document will go into design stage in early 2026 with an anticipated official release in the first half of 2026. We thank all of our members and stakeholders who have provided feedback and look forward to sharing it with you soon.

A sneak preview – our new vision is … *a thriving alcohol, tobacco and other drug sector that drives equitable health, wellbeing, inclusion and self-determination for all Tasmanians."*

Any questions for the board please contact our Chair - Damian Collins.

Advocating for appropriate AOD investment

ATDC Budget Priority Statement 2026-27 – Please see our submission here. The Pre-Budget Consultation page can be found here. We are aware that members will have their own submissions and invite you to share these with us so we can be across sector priorities. I would like to acknowledge Zoe Bok (Director Policy and Impact 2ic) and Tania Walker, (Digital and Communications Lead) for their work.

Renewal of rolling/recurrent funding agreements from July 1 2025 – all organisations will have had core funding renewed for three years as at July 2025. Work continues to shift to five year funding agreements for member organisations. The ATDC has had notification of shifting to a five year funding agreement from July 2026. We will continue to advocate along with our sector partners such as TasCOSS and peaks coalition to fast track the community funding project lead by DPAC. This is featured in our Budget Priority response to Treasury.

Ongoing advocacy for state government funding ending June 2026 – across the sector there is a significant amount of funding on the line as at June 2026 for the AOD sector. We put out a call recently for members to share any funding that is concluding on June 2026. We have a list of 10 members who have significant pieces of funding that is concluding. Many of these funding allocations are over 5 years old with some over 10 years old. Please get in contact if you would like to be included in broad sector advocacy – noting the link to the community funding project work of DPAC.

Australian Government/PHT funding including DATSM component - there was an announcement yesterday on MYEFO that existing grants will be extended for one year 2026-27 and that organisations will be contacted by Xmas directly from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to confirm.

AOD Reform Agenda investment

AOD Reform is now a component of the MH Demand budget allocation, which has been included in forward estimates (four years). The dedicated funding line elapsed in June 2025 and has now been replaced with the aggregate MH Demand funding line which is inclusive of AOD Reform.

Leading and Navigating Change (Policy & Reform)

Pill Testing offer made to state government - Pill Testing Australia & Harm Reduction Australia wrote to the government in November 2025 with a proposal to provide free trial of public health-based pill testing service at a selected Tasmanian festival. At the time of writing, the Government has not responded. RACGP put a media release out. The ATDC has spoken to Police Minister Felix Ellis and also reached out to the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and will continue the conversation. The ATDC has authored two media advocacy pieces on the issue across November and December.

AOD Workforce Development Strategy – is open for feedback from focus group members - the first draft of the AOD Workforce Development Strategy was distributed to focus group members for feedback on 30 October 2025. Focus group consultation closes on 12 December 2025 with ATDC scheduled to hand the document over to the Department of Health for public consultation and finalisation at the end of January 2026. Any questions – email Scott Marshall.

20 Year Preventive Health Strategy– The next stage of the development of a 20 year strategy by Tasmanian DoH is soon to commence. This will involve a public consultation.

Youth Justice Reform - The Tasmanian Government is reforming the youth justice system - there's a Youth Justice Blueprint and Youth Justice Reform Taskforce Action Plan which guides this work. A Youth Justice Taskforce Team in DECYP is responsible for progressing work under the Action Plan and Blueprint. *Current projects:*

a. Development and implementation of a youth after-hours diversion service in Glenorchy (this is a six-month pilot program in collaboration with Tas Police, Anglicare and Catholic Care).
b. Development of a small grants program in collaboration with Brighton Council to fund short term local early intervention and prevention initiatives.
c. Development of a youth hub in collaboration with Glenorchy City Council.
d. Development and release of a youth justice diversionary framework and implementation plan (both of which identify AOD as a priority area).
e. Review of the current bail support program in Tasmania (with the aim of increasing services for young people who are on bail).
f. Review of police cautions and community conferences.

Sign up to the reform newsletter for project updates via YJReform@decyp.tas.gov.au

New -Rethink Mental Health Strategy – in development: the ATDC is a key stakeholder in the next iteration of the Rethink Mental Health Strategy. In this period the ATDC attended a roundtable to discuss the new strategy and also met with the team evaluating the previous Rethink Strategy.

Tasmanian Disability Inclusion Plan – open for consultation – The upcoming plan will be developed in collaboration with people with disability. DPAC have written a discussion paper and are seeking feedback by 10 March 2026. The consultation webpage can be found here.

National Peak Body (AADC) policy submissions: The national peak continues to be incredibly active in submitting a range of policy submissions where ATOD may be relevant. The ATDC continues to feed into this work alongside our state and territory counterparts. Since the last CEO Communique in June:

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into the Health Impacts of AOD in Australia (2nd submission; October 2025)
- Fair Work Commission Gender-based undervaluation – SCHADS awards review (September 2025)
- Productivity Commission's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review: Interim Report (July 2025)
- Telehealth Sector Working Group Draft C.A.R.E Telehealth Principles (July 2025)

Legislation

Poisons Act amendment (Interstate Prescriptions) Bill passed December 2025 - Under the reforms, Tasmanian pharmacists will be able to dispense certain prescriptions issued by interstate practitioners for medicines, provided it complies with existing State requirements. This includes psychostimulants commonly used to treat ADHD, opioids, medicinal cannabis and benzodiazepines. Implementation arrangements, including the commencement date anticipated in early 2026 following Royal Assent, will be confirmed and communicated to pharmacists, prescribers and patients. For further information please go here.

Liquor Act Reform

The Tasmanian Government is reforming the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990*. Key changes include: replacing the existing licence and permit categories, risk-based application and fee structures where lower risk activities will have a simpler application process and lower fees, creating an online, application process, allowing licenses to be held by a business, not just an individual, clarifying and naming the availability of a single permit for festivals and events with multiple vendors and 10-day approval timeframes for 'low-risk' activities. Currently they have invited the ATDC and other stakeholders to provide feedback by December 15 2025. Please get in touch if you would like more info or to have a discussion with us if you are interested in participating.

Cannabis Law Reform - Cannabis Law Reform petition – The CEO met with MP Craig Garland to discuss the Cannabis Law Reform petition. In the petition it states:

- That the continued criminalisation of cannabis for personal use is unjust, ineffective, and increasingly out of touch with both evidence and public opinion. Treating ordinary Tasmanians as criminals for personal use of cannabis diverts scarce police and court resources, perpetuates stigma, and fails to reduce harm
- That Tasmanians lawfully prescribed medicinal cannabis face unreasonable barriers to accessing their treatment. Costs remain higher than in other jurisdictions, supply is unreliable, and patients risk prosecution under driving laws that do not distinguish between impairment and the presence of prescribed medication. This inequity denies many Tasmanians safe and affordable access to the medicine they require.
- Evidence-based law reform is needed. A considered, transparent and community-informed approach must guide change so that regulation is fair, consistent, and focused on harm reduction.

The petition calls for a focus on: cannabis regulation in Tasmania, including medicinal cannabis and the impact and effectiveness of the criminal justice response; the social, economic, and public health impacts of current laws; the case for reform, including national and international comparisons, and, options for regulatory change that better serve Tasmanians.

For more information and to sign the petition, click the link above.

Amplifying the voice of lived and living experience

Lived Experience Advocate Service: The LEAS continues to strengthen the voice of lived experience year on year. This year, our amazing group of LEAs have made a huge impact. LEAs have continued to engage with roles such as selection panels, working groups, executive meetings, and personal presentations.

Recent highlights:

- Launch of the LLE Acknowledgement video – consider using this at an event or meeting held by your organisation. You may even recognise yourself in it.
- Community of Practice sessions continue to be offered – with four delivered since the last CEO communique. LEAs continue to take on leadership roles within the Community of Practice sessions to build skills and experience.
- Consultations to support the development of a Service Delivery Framework document suite, and Workforce Development Strategy as part of the AOD Reform Agenda work.
- Media engagement with LEA on drug checking and the need for this vital service in Tasmania.
- LEA leader and Director Lived and Living Experience presented to the ATDC Board Development about priorities and challenges for the LLE business area
- Peer worker op-ed article published in the Mercury highlighting the advocacy of the LLE community in progressing this vital workforce for the AOD sector.
- The ATDC board updated the Statement of Intent for meaningful LLE engagement.

Lived and Living Experience Leadership Steering Committee: This committee is comprised of six Lived Experience Advocate Leaders, Director Lived and Living Experience and Director Policy and Impact, and held its first 3 meetings in October and December. The core intent of this committee is to

- direct ATDC's LLE systemic advocacy, so it reflects what matters most to Tasmanians with LLE
- provide high level strategic and policy expert advice to ATDC, and
- strengthen the leadership capability of Tasmanians with LLEso to prepare for the instigation of an AOD lived and living experience organisation.

Lived Experience Representation Review: the final stage of this review is underway with consultation occurring and the final report to be handed to DoH late February 2026. The Tasmanian Centre for Mental Health Service Innovation is conducting this work and the scope is lived experience representation across AOD, mental health and suicide prevention sectors. Please contact Claire Ripper for more information.

Don't forget an ATDC member can request the service of an Advocate for free, if you would like to do so, please go here. Not sure what Advocates do? Click here.

Tackling stigma and discrimination

Sector Stigma position statement : Scott Marshall, Reform Project Officer has been collecting signatories and is readying this paper to go to the graphic designers. DoH, PHT and ATDC along with member organisations have all provided their logos. Haven't seen it and want to be a signatory? Please get in touch with Scott – scott@atdc.org.au

Representing the sector

The team continue to represent the sector on many working groups and committees. The ATDC has regular meetings with departmental representatives from Public Health Services, the Reform Agenda Team and Alcohol and Drug Service. Please reach out if you need contact information in the Department of Health- as there have been some turn over in key staff in the last 12 months.

Additionally since the last communique in June, the ATDC met with an array of state and federal politicians that included The Hon Bridget Archer, The Hon Felix Elllis, Sarah Lovell, David O'Byrne, Andrew Wilkie, Craig Garland, Jess Teesdale.

Other committee/group meetings over the past three months included:

Interagency Drug Policy Committee (IDPC) and Tasmanian Drug Strategy Advisory Group: The IDPC now only meets twice a year and oversees the implementation of the Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029 and associated whole-of-government work. The TDS is now two years in, has not received any funding to progress new projects and as yet there remains significant work to be done, for example – an Alcohol Action plan, an Illicit Drug plan and

the Prevention, Promotion and Early Intervention framework. The initial TDS implementation plan ends in December 2025 with a second implementation plan currently under development.

Statewide Mental Health Services Reform Program Group: This group has not met since October 2024, is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing, and includes updates from the four mental health reform streams as well as the AOD reform stream. This is attended mostly by departmental staff as well as AOD and mental health peak bodies. There is an upcoming meeting scheduled for late-December.

AOD Reform Program Control Group: This group oversees progress against the AOD Reform Agenda. These meetings continue to be held regularly and the ATDC is a member alongside Primary Health Tasmania, and two community-managed AOD service providers (currently The Salvation Army and The Link Youth Health Service). The ATDC effectively advocated to have a concentrated focus on the Reform Agenda Service Delivery Framework Suite. Drafts were presented to the sector and stakeholders in October and risks identified in presenting these to public consultation. The ATDC participated in two 'roundtable' discussions to inform the next draft of the AOD Service Delivery Framework, AOD Service Delivery Principles and AOD Service System Continuum of Care. The ATDC has also coordinated member feedback and provided a summary to the Department of Health on the three abovementioned documents, and the AOD Service Delivery Glossary. All four documents are scheduled to go to public consultation in January 2026.

Tasmanian Drug and Alcohol Services Planning Model & AOD Withdrawal- Residential Rehabilitation Review – These projects were completed in October 2025 and now sit with the DoH. Both projects were run by the UNSW Social Policy Research Centre, for more information on the DASPM tool go here. The T-DASPM is not for wider release and will sit with the DoH to inform commissioning and policy decisions. The AOD Withdrawal-Residential Rehabilitation Review is due for release by the end of this year.

AOD CEO Peaks Network: this group consists of CEOs from state and territory AOD peak organisations across the country and is coordinated by the AADC. This group meets monthly to discuss issues at the national level. In Early December the group met face to face in Canberra and met with representatives from the Drug Strategy Branch. As noted earlier, indication of continuation of funding for four PHT-funded ATDC members should be forthcoming in MYEFO process, including whether the DATSM component is included. This group also discusses issues such as Opioid Dependence Treatment Program, NIAA funding and also to advocate for robust governance arrangements at the Federal - state level more generally. At the national level, the latest report Health impacts into alcohol and other drugs in Australia was released and the review continues into the next stage, all information on this process can be found in the link.

AADC Policy Officers: this group is convened by our national peak body the AADC. This is a meeting of policy officers from each state and territory jurisdiction as well as some representing specialist organisation within the ATOD sector nationally. The Director Policy and Impact participates in this group on national AOD matters.

LEX Training HUB Steering Committee: The LEX Training Hub is still operational and managed by the Mental Health Council of Tasmania. The Hub provides short generalist 'taster' courses for people wanting to start their career in peer work. There is no dedicated AOD component. The intention is that individuals who move through this course will then go on to get additional training through TAFE (for the mental health sector there is the mental

health peer worker course). The challenge for the AOD sector is the pathway *after* the LEX offering is non existent. LEX Hub courses are only intended to be a first step rather than a job ready offering and TAFE does not offer AOD content in their peer worker course.

Championing the data & evidence

Central Intake Referral Service (CIRS) - In early June and again in October, the ATDC met with the new Service Manager, CIRS, to seek project updates. From the June meeting, it was clear that roll out into the AOD Sector had not commenced at that point in time and was limited to referring callers identified as experiencing AOD use to Alcohol and Drug Service. There has been no substantial change since this time, with the October meeting reiterating concerns around current CIRS appropriateness for the AOD Sector. This work remains a priority for DOH (and an active blocker) rather than developing a data system for the AOD sector.

The Team

Since the last communique in June there has been significant movement and small changes to titles and roles:

- Communications Officer – Ella Van Emmerik – went on parental leave from September for 12 months
- Digital and Communications Lead – Tania Walker joined us. This is a temporary position (14 months) while Ella is on parental leave.
- Zoe Bok has offered her resignation – last day February 5, 2026.
- Claire Ripper is moving into the Director Policy & Impact 2ic role.
- Director Lived and Living Experience is currently being recruited to

Happy Holidays,

Jackie
CEO ceo@atdc.org.au or 0438 347 056