

Media Release

30 August 2018

TIME TO ACT AND SAVE LIVES

International Overdose Awareness Day (31 August) is a time for Canberrans to come together to remember loved ones lost and rally to save lives.

In 2016, the number of Australians who died from drug induced deaths was higher than the national road toll. Over 1,800 Australians lost their lives to drugs in 2016, the highest number in 20 years.

“Overdose death is preventable,” Directions Health Services Acting CEO, Stephanie Stephens said. “As a community we have a responsibility to do more to save lives.

“International Overdose Awareness Day is an opportunity for us to fight against the stigma associated with drug use that discourages people from seeking help.”

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 32 people living in the ACT died from a drug overdose in 2016. This is a rate of 7.9 deaths per 100,000 persons and higher than the capital city average of 7.1 deaths.

“While methamphetamines are of great concern and deaths caused by these drugs are increasing every year, Australians dying from a drug induced death are most likely to be a middle age man who is misusing prescription drugs and accidentally overdoses.” Ms Stephens said.

“Everyone who loses their life to a preventable drug overdose is someone’s father, son, brother, husband, wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend. They leave behind a grieving family.

“On International Overdose Awareness Day we must say no more preventable deaths!

“Instead of pretending drug use does not happen in our community, or is someone else’s problem, it is time to understand that it affects us all and we must invest in services that will prevent overdose deaths.

“When people are ready to reach out, we must offer a helping, non-judgmental and friendly hand.

“Directions Health and other organisations such as the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA) also support the use of Naloxone as a life-saving strategy. Naloxone can reverse opioid overdose.

“Having Naloxone on hand could help prevent opioid overdose deaths.

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“People can get a script from a GP, have it filled at a chemist, or visit CAHMA, so they’re able to respond quickly if they encounter someone they believe has overdosed.

“Knowing the signs and being ready to respond to an overdose can save lives.”

Directions Health Services is one of the Canberra and Southern NSW regions’ most experienced community organisations delivering programs and services to people impacted by alcohol, drugs and other addictions.

Anyone seeking information about the support services available in their local area can call Directions Health Services on 02 6132 4800 or visit www.directionshealth.com

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