

Media Release

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NUMBER OF CANBERRANS SEEKING HELP DOUBLES

The number of Canberrans impacted by alcohol, tobacco and other drug use who are engaging with Directions Health's services have doubled between 2016-17 and 2018-19, according to the organisation's latest annual report.

"There has been a steady increase in the number of people seeking support over several years," Directions Health CEO, Bronwyn Hendry said. "Last financial year over 5,000 clients engaged with Directions Health services, up from 2,540 two years ago.

"We are experiencing increased demand on our existing services and have introduced new treatment places in response. We are seeing more new clients seek out services as well as increasing rates of client engagement and use of services."

"However, new figures released last week show there is still significant unmet demand in the ACT."

The Ecstasy and Other Drugs Reporting System report found that one quarter of participants reported they used ecstasy weekly or more often and a significant proportion had also used cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs in the last six months.

"However, only 7% of ACT participants interviewed were receiving drug treatment, which is less than a third of the people who may be experiencing problems with their ecstasy use," Ms Hendry said. "With more frequent access to pill testing, these people will be more likely to engage with health services".

"Nearly half of Canberrans interviewed for the Illicit Drug Reporting System were currently in drug treatment. While this is encouraging, it means half of the people who are injecting drugs in the ACT are not yet getting support for their drug use".

"Based on these samples, we can be doing more to make treatment services accessible.

"Drug and alcohol services, such as Directions Health, focus on harm minimisation and our own data shows Canberrans engaging with services experience significant positive outcomes. For example, clients of our Arcadia House services this year reported a dramatic 66 per cent reduction in mental health symptoms and significant overall improvements in holistic quality of life."

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