

The Australian (illicit) drug policy timeline: 1985-2013

The Australian (illicit) drug policy timeline provides a list of key events, policy and legislative changes that have occurred in Australia between 1985 and February 28 2013. Events are listed by jurisdiction, at the national and state/ territory level. All events added in the last six months are highlighted in blue.

Here we list events in the **Australian Capital Territory only**. For events in other jurisdictions please see the relevant timeline.

DPMP will continue to update the timeline every June and December. Please feel free to email through any comments or suggested inclusions.

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2012	<p>ACT Greens issued a bill for reform of the infringement system relating to road traffic offences: Road Transport (General) (Infringement Notices) Amendment Bill 2012 (Feb).</p> <p>ATODA released a discussion paper calling for the extension of reforms of the ACT Infringement Scheme from roadside drug to other infringement schemes, including the Simple Cannabis Offence Notice scheme (Mar).</p> <p>Government response to the report, <i>Human Rights ACT 2004</i> (ACT): The First Five Years of Operation, tabled. Noted the positive achievements and desire to build upon this (Mar).</p> <p>ACT Infringements System Reform introduced for road traffic offences: (1) Options to pay fines through installments; (2) A system of community work and social development programs, which people on low income or with special circumstances can undertake in lieu of payments; (3) Options to waive fines in special circumstances (May).</p> <p>ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher released the Draft Strategic Framework for the Management of Blood-Borne Viruses in the Alexander Maconochie Centre 2012-2014. Strategies included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal for a trial needle and syringe program in the Alexander Maconochie Centre – on a one-for-one syringe basis. The trial will constitute the first Australian prison-based NSP. • That detainees have screening and vaccinations for all those coming into the AMC. • That detainees within the AMC have ready access to full-strength household bleach and information and education about how to prevent and manage BBVs (Aug). <p>High level of media debate about the proposed NSP at the AMC (Aug).</p> <p>ACT Comorbidity (Mental Health and Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Problems) Strategy 2012-2014 released (Aug).</p> <p>As part of 2012-13 budget the ACT Government announced the establishment of a Throughcare Unit to better support prison detainees returning to the community and co-ordinate their service delivery and case management. A total of \$1.12 million has been provided over two years (Jun).</p> <p>The ACT Labor Party and the ACT Greens (Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA) signed a parliamentary agreement that they would “establish a needle and syringe exchange program at the AMC medical centre.” This was one of the conditions made in order to form a minority government, following the 2012 ACT Election (Nov 2).</p> <p>The <i>Human Rights Amendment Bill 2012</i> was adopted, adding section 27A Right to education to the act. This entered into force on 1 Jan 2013 (Aug).</p> <p>Ms Katy Gallagher MLA, ACT Chief Minister and Minister for Health tabled the report “The Review of the Need to Expand Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services in the ACT, 2012” and the Health Directorate response to the report in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Key conclusions from the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no strong evidence of a need to increase the number of residential rehabilitation beds in the ACT; • There is evidence of barriers for many people to accessing treatment and support services, including residential rehabilitation programs, which need to be removed. <p>Recommendations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing referrers, prospective clients and family members / friends of those with alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) problems, with more detailed information about the eligibility criteria, structure and content of programs and expectations of those who participate in programs • Improve intake, transition and aftercare support (Aug).
2011	<p>The Minister for Community Services released a discussion paper “Towards a diversionary framework for the ACT”. This acknowledged the need for a much more whole of government approach to diversion (Feb).</p> <p>Knowledge Consulting report released: “<i>Report of the Independent Review of Operations at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.</i>” Report examined the first 12 months of operation and noted concerns about a lack of coordination of some drug policies and procedures (Mar).</p> <p>New report released: “<i>Health Status of Young People in the ACT.</i>” Report showed the use of illicit substances by young people decreased. For example, lifetime use amongst those aged 12-17 decreased from 20.3% in 2005 to 14.8% in 2008, continuing the downward trend since 1996 (37.5%). Use of at least one substance in the last week also declined: from 4.8% in 2005 to 3.7% in 2008 (Apr).</p>

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	<p>Burnet report (2010-2011) tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly: <i>“External component of the evaluation of drug policies and services and their subsequent effects on prisoners and staff within the Alexander Maconochie Centre.”</i> Key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High prevalence of lifetime and current illicit drug use at the AMC and evidence of trafficking of drugs into the prison. • Reports of at least one case of in-prison transmission of HCV within the new AMC. • Several positive program activities at the AMC went some way to fulfilling drug policy objectives. However, these constituted ‘pockets of effectiveness.’ <p>Report made 69 recommendations inc:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a specific drug policy framework for the AMC; • Consultations with relevant stakeholders to identify feasibility of a trail NSP at the AMC & appropriate models for its delivery; • Exploration of a model for provision of naloxone to prisoners at release; • Swifter pharmacotherapy provision: <48 hours after requesting induction (Apr). <p>Mr Michael Moore, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) was engaged by the ACT Government, to respond to the Burnet Report by: assessing barriers and enablers to implementation of an NSP in the AMC; & investigating models for delivery (May).</p> <p>Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher MLA, become Chief Minister of the ACT (May).</p> <p>Petition signed by 86% of the Alexander Maconochie Centre’s correctional officers called on the ACT Legislative Assembly to reject any proposal for a needle and syringe program at the AMC. Put together by the Community and Public Sector Union it stated that “our working environment in the AMC is already dangerous enough and we will actively fight any proposal to make it worse by introducing needle syringes into our workplace.” Petition was tabled by opposition Liberal corrections spokesman Jeremy Hanson (21 Jun).</p> <p>Chief Minister and Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher MLA tabled the ACT Government’s final response to Burnet Report (evaluation of drug policies and services at the AMC), arising actions and timelines. The ACT Government announced no immediate disagreement with any of the 69 recommendations. Instead, 20 were agreed to in full, including the need to develop a drug strategy for the AMC and to improve the governance structure overseeing policies and services. Another 26 recommendations were agreed to in principle, including exploration of the development and implementation of a program to provide Naloxone to at-risk prisoners on release (28 Jun).</p> <p>Under local medicines laws the ACT Government automatically adopted the decision of the Therapeutic Goods Authority to prohibit from 6 July eight synthetic cannabinoids. This made manufacturing, possession, supply and/or use within the ACT illegal from 8 Jul (amnesty on prosecution was provided until Aug 8) (Jul).</p> <p>Public Health Association of Australia report released: “Balancing access and safety: meeting the challenge of blood borne viruses in prison - report for the ACT Government into the implementation of a NSP at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.” Report made 7 recommendations including that the ACT Corrections Management Act 2007 be amended to require the establishment of an NSP at the AMC. Key evidence to support this was the high number of IDU in the prison (a third of inmates had reported injecting drugs) and that an unregulated NSP already operated, controlled by prisoners not health workers. Three models for an NSP were put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1: A contained NSP; • Model 2: Equipment provision from existing AMC health centre; • Model 3: ‘One for one’ exchange vending style machines (Jul). <p>ACT Government provided 6 weeks of public consultation on the PHAA Report views and recommendations (Jul-Sep).</p> <p>Following the 6 July scheduling by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) of eight synthetic cannabinoids, the ACT adopted the changes under local medicines laws. This made it illegal from 8 July to manufacture, obtain, possess, supply, sell and/or use products containing synthetic cannabis in the ACT (Jul).</p> <p>Practice directions for a new ACT Youth Drug and Alcohol Court (YDAC) were adopted. The program, starting as a two year trial on 1 Dec 2011, sought to provide a pre-sentence diversionary opportunity for children and young offenders with a demonstrable alcohol or drug problem (Jul).</p> <p>Justice and Community Safety Directorate, <i>ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2011-2013</i> and <i>ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020</i> adopted. Both include roadside drug testing initiatives (Nov).</p> <p>Street Law Report released - “The Downward Spiral: How a fine can cause homelessness in the ACT.” The report identified that the ACT infringement system was having a disproportionately negative impact on vulnerable populations, including those with serious AOD issues (Nov).</p> <p>Australia’s first overdose management program that provides naloxone (Narcan ®) on prescription to potential overdose victims launched. Training will be conducted for opioid users and other potential overdose witnesses over a two-year year period with 200 participants. Eligible participants who successfully complete the training will be prescribed naloxone by a General Practitioner upon reaching a level of competence and assessment. The program will be evaluated by an external evaluation team led by Associate Professor Paul Dietze and Professor Simon Lenton (Dec).</p>
2010	<p>Government released for public comment its proposed bill for roadside drug testing. The <i>Road Transport (Drug Driving) Bill 2010</i> was argued to be a comprehensive bill that would fit within existing policies on human rights and harm minimisation (27 May).</p> <p>Former ACT Supreme Court judge Ken Crispin published a book, “The Quest for Justice,” which questioned the war on drugs. In it he states that treating illicit drug use as a criminal justice problem has not and will never work (May).</p> <p>The Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association Australian Capital Territory Inc (ATODA), was launched as the new independent peak body for the ACT ATOD sector. It</p>

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	<p>provides for members from both the non-government and government sectors (18 Jun).</p> <p>ACT Human Rights Commissioner provided her opinion that the opposition bill for roadside drug testing was non-compliant with the ACT <i>Human Rights Act</i> since it failed the proportionality test: it would impinge on human rights but did not guarantee doing so would lead to justifiable community benefit. She also argued that there was conflict with the ACT drug legislation, as the ACT had decriminalised possession of personal supply of cannabis yet random roadside drug testing would impose serious criminal sanctions on the use of cannabis (29 Jun).</p> <p><i>Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) (Random Drug Testing) Amendment Bill 2009</i> passed by the opposition party (Liberals) and the Greens for testing of cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines (30 Jun).</p> <p>The ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014 adopted. Specific aims were minimising harm, improving health and social well-being, developing evidence-based policies and implementing the Strategy Action Plan in a manner that respects, protects and promotes human rights. 66 strategic priorities were specified based on the size and severity of the problem, evidence of effectiveness of interventions and the environmental factors that facilitate or impede effective implementation. Key interventions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a local warning system regarding drug market & drug-related harms; • Ensure prisoners & other detainees can access the same community-based AOD programs in & post detention; • Develop a specific policy framework to support consumer participation in drug treatment & support services; & • Implement national clinical guidelines for the management of drug use during pregnancy, birth & early years (Jun). <p>Amanda Bresnan MLA for the ACT Greens released a new paper 'Implementing a Needle and Syringe Program in the Alexander Maconochie Centre' for public consultation. The paper proposed that a needle syringe program be introduced into the ACT prison (Jul).</p> <p>Repeal of Part 9 of the Drugs of Dependence Act 1989 led to end of the Treatment Referral Program (TRP) program (Aug).</p> <p>ACT Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, said that in light of the New South Wales Government's decision to formalise an injecting room in Sydney's Kings Cross, he will now consider the idea of introducing a needle syringe program in the new Alexander Maconochie Centre (Sep).</p> <p>Paper 'Implementing a Needle and Syringe Program in the Alexander Maconochie Centre—Summary of responses to discussion paper', prepared by Amanda Bresnan, ACT Greens MLA, tabled in the Legislative Assembly for the ACT (Nov.)</p> <p>The first Annual General Meeting of the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT Inc. (ATODA) conducted, with Ms Anne Kirwin elected as the inaugural President (Nov.)</p> <p>Expanding Naloxone Availability in the ACT (ENAACT) Committee formed, a governance group that sought to provide expert guidance and support the development of a program to expand Naloxone availability in the ACT. Key members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (lead) • ACT Ambulance Service; • ACT Corrections Health; • ACT Health; • ATODA; • Burnet Institute; • National Drug Research Institute; & • Pharmacy Guild, ACT Branch (Nov). <p>ACT 2011/2012 Budget Submission for a program involving peer administration of Naloxone. Budgeted \$100,000 per year for 24 month trial involving 200 participants (Dec).</p> <p>The ACT Legislative Assembly asked the Attorney-General to direct the ACT Human Rights Commission to conduct an inquiry into the youth justice system, and to undertake a Human Rights Audit of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (Dec).</p>
2009	<p><i>Human Rights ACT 2004 (ACT): The First Five Years of Operation Report</i> released. Concluded that the Human Rights Act has improved the quality of law-making in the Territory by ensuring human rights concerns are given due consideration in the framing of new legislation and policy (Jun).</p> <p>Workshop on Strategic Directions and Governance for the ACT AOD Sector held at University House, ANU, Canberra: resolved to establish an incorporated ACT ATOD Peak body. Resolution subsequently endorsed by the ACT ATOD services Executive Directors Group (Jul 27-28).</p> <p>Draft ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014 released for public comment and consultation (Nov).</p> <p>Draft ACT Comorbidity Strategy released for public comment and consultation (Dec).</p> <p>Opposition police spokesman Jeremy Hanson tabled a bill - <i>Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) (Random Drug Testing) Amendment Bill 2009</i> - seeking to give police powers to conduct roadside drug testing for cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines, similar to provisions in place in other Australian jurisdictions. Consideration of the Bill was deferred (Dec).</p>
2008	<p>ACT Government released the adult health services plan for Canberra's new prison: Alexander Maconochie Centre. The plan allowed the provision of bleach but not a</p>

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	<p>needle syringe program for inmates. The strategy stated that the position would be reviewed, as part of a comprehensive evaluation, 18 months after the prison was commissioned (Mar).</p> <p>The report of the 2007 External Review of the ACT Alcohol and Other Drug Service System, undertaken by Siggins Miller on behalf of ACT Health, was released. Reviewers considered the current arrangements, the changing needs of the population, the issues affecting the AOD service system, and its capacity to address them. Reviewers recommended enhancing the system capacity for pharmacotherapy clients, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, rehabilitation and relapse prevention, plus building AOD literacy, workforce development and governance and accountability. ACT Health initiated a consultation process with stakeholders to discuss the report's findings and recommendations.</p> <p>Liberal MLA Steve Pratt tabled legislation to introduce roadside drug testing in the ACT. The Government responded that it would not rush into introducing such a proposal and that it was examining the evidence from other jurisdictions and would consult with the community on the issue (Apr).</p> <p>Discussion Paper: Review of the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977 released by the ACT Government. Paper aimed to get community views on issues such as how to introduce roadside drug testing in the ACT, what drugs should be tested for, whether drug testing should be compulsory for all drivers detected for drink driving and whether offences should be the same as for drink driving. The ACT Government provided two months to receive feedback (May).</p> <p>The ACT AOD Sector Project announced that the First Annual ACT Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector Conference would be held as part of Drug Action Week 2008 (May).</p> <p>Proposed ACT legislation for the introduction of roadside drug testing lapsed (Oct).</p> <p>Legislation passed allowing police to carry out undercover controlled operations to target drug cartels, money laundering and terrorist cells: the <i>ACT Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act 2008</i> (18 Aug).</p> <p><i>ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2007</i> was passed. The act consolidated four acts and regulations on medicines, poisons and prohibited substances. The act repealed the <i>Poisons and Drugs Act 1978</i>, the <i>Poisons Act 1993</i>, the <i>Public Health (Prohibited Drugs) Act 1957</i> and amended the <i>Drugs of Dependence Act 1989</i> to provide a more unified and workable scheme (Aug).</p> <p>ACT Government released its Draft Mental Health Services Plan 2008 – 2013 for public consultation (Sep).</p> <p>Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT Inc (ADFACT) announced its intention to operate - in partnership with ACT Corrective Services and ACT Corrections Health – a therapeutic community in Canberra's new prison Alexander Maconochie Centre (Dec).</p> <p>ACT Comorbidity Strategic Working Group was established with the assistance of funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing <i>National Comorbidity Project's Improved Services Initiative</i>.</p>
2007	<p>ACT Draft Adult Corrections Health Services Plan 2007-2010 released. Noted that needle syringe exchange should be considered and ACT Health planned to consider the merits of a trial in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (Jul).</p> <p>ACT drug user group - Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA) – re-opened (Jul).</p> <p>ACT Corrective Services Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Strategy 2006 - 2008 adopted. Strategy aimed for harm minimisation, demand reduction and effective clinical management for substance misusers (Sep).</p>
2006	<p>Report on "ACT Government Expenditure on Preventing and Responding to Drug Abuse, 2004-05" estimated ACT Government expenditure on drug abuse in 2004-05 was \$85.094 million, 3.2% of the total ACT budget for the year. Of this 22% was spent in the health sector, 77% in the law enforcement sector and 1% on emergency services (Mar).</p> <p>Final report on trial of the syringe vending machines released. Concluded trial had gone well and been accepted by community and recommended expansion of syringe vending machines in the ACT (Jun).</p> <p>ACT drug user group - Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA) – closed (Jul).</p>
2005	<p>Trial of syringe vending machines commenced at the Civic, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Phillip Community Health Centres (Feb).</p> <p><i>Drugs of Dependence (Cannabis for Medical Conditions Trial) Amendment Bill 2005</i> sponsored by a Greens member Dr Deb Foskey as an exposure draft 18 Oct 2005 - lapsed.</p> <p>Criminal Code (Serious Drug Offences) Amendment Act 2004 came into force, reducing eligibility criteria for the Simple Cannabis Offence Notice (SCON) scheme. The new criteria included a maximum of 5 to 2 cannabis plants and excluded all hydroponically grown plants (May).</p> <p>ACT Minister for Health, Simon Corbell MLA, announced that he would propose to his Cabinet colleagues that the new Canberra prison – Alexander Maconochie Centre – have a needle syringe program (NSP) as part of its comprehensive health plan (Nov).</p>
2004	<p>Human Rights Act adopted in the ACT (Mar).</p> <p><i>Drugs of Dependence (Cannabis for Medical Conditions) Amendment Bill 2004</i>. Presented by Ms Kerrie Tucker (Greens). Date presented: 30 June 2004 (5th Assembly). Defeated 25 August 2004.</p> <p>Third ACT drug strategy released: Alcohol, Tobacco & other Drugs Strategy 2004-2008. This included an action plan for implementation (Aug).</p>

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	ACT <i>Drugs of Dependence Act 1989</i> amended to allow supply of needle and syringes through vending machines (Aug).
2003	Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service evaluation completed by Morgan Disney and Associates – key recommendation: need to increase program access and improve services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Jun). ACT Standing Committee on Health released report “Access to Needles and Syringes by Intravenous Drug Users.” Report recommended that the Government install injecting equipment vending machines across the whole of the ACT and that it provide injecting equipment exchange in the ACT prisons (Aug). ACT Government announced \$250,000 to implement priority areas of drug strategy including 100 extra treatment places to trial needle and syringe vending machines and examine the feasibility of needle exchange in ACT prisons (Dec).
2002	Alcohol Tobacco and other Drug Taskforce established to devise a new drug strategy (Aug). New ACT drug user group established - Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA).
2001	COAG-IDDI agreement signed (May) ACT election - ALP gained office and postponed issue of a SIP trial until after the evaluation of the NSW MSIC trial (Nov) ACT Policing and Early Intervention Diversion Program (PEID - later called PED) introduced (Dec)
2000	Advisory Committee established to oversee Supervised Injecting Place trial (Feb) SIP trial postponed by ACT Government for 18 months (until election) following budget negotiations between the minority Liberal Government and independents (Jul) Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service (CADAS) introduced, following discussions between Chief Magistrate and ACT Health (Oct)
1999	Report on Evaluation of ACT Drug Strategy 1995-97 released. ACT drug user group - Australian Capital Territory IV League (ACTIV League) disbanded Dual Diagnosis: Stopping the merry-go-round a report of findings from a review of mental health and alcohol and other drug problems in the ACT (Apr). Canberra Injectors Network, CIN was funded as new ACT drug user group (Jul). Second ACT drug strategy released: From Harm to Hope: ACT Drug Strategy 1999 (Sep). Supervised Injecting Place Trial Act 1999 passed by the ACT Legislative Assembly (Dec).
1998	Discussions began around trialling a ‘supervised injecting place’ (SIP) and Supervised Injecting Place Trial Advisory Committee was established.
1997	ACT Government formally sought and obtained support at the MCDS meeting for a heroin trial (Jul) Commonwealth Government declined to authorise importation of heroin to support the trial (Aug) Canberra Injectors Network, CIN – established by drug users with aim of providing peer-based education.
1996	Heroin Pilot Task Force recommended that a trial proceed (Jan)
1995	NCEPH/AIC team released report recommending that a heroin trial proceed and provided a detailed plan for a phased series of studies that would begin with a trial of heroin prescription for 40 patients. It also recommended that 3 months of consultation be undertaken to disseminate findings of report (Jun). ACT Government established a 29-member Heroin Pilot Task Force chaired by Mr Kevin Waller AM to consult with the community and make recommendations about whether or not the trial should proceed and how the feasibility research might best be implemented (Jul). ACT Government released its first drug strategy – ACT Drug Strategy 1995-97 (Sep).
1994	
1993	
1992	Simple Cannabis Offence Notice (SCON) expiation scheme for cannabis offences introduced - enabled cannabis offenders possessing <25 grams of cannabis or <5 plants to avoid a criminal conviction by payment of a \$100 fine
1991	Select committee of the ACT Legislative Assembly proposed expiation scheme for cannabis and a heroin trial National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) began a study to determine heroin trial feasibility (1991-1995)
1990	
1989	1989 Drugs of Dependence Act (DODA)

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	<p>The Treatment Referral Program (TRP) post sentencing diversion program for illicit drug-related offenders commenced under the DODA (Mar)</p> <p>Select committee appointed to report on HIV, illegal drugs and prostitution</p> <p>First Needle and Syringe Exchange Program opened in ACT</p>
1988	<p>Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act (Cth) passed creating a legislative assembly and giving it limited powers of self-government</p> <p>User group - Australian Capital Territory IV League (ACTIV League) formed</p>
1987	<p>ACT Drug Indicators Project pilot commenced (1987-1989). Project linked individual record data from the drug treatment and criminal justice systems in the aim of increasing understanding of the incidence, character and treatment and criminal justice responses to illicit drug use.</p>
1986	
1985	