

20 October 2022

DRUGS OF DEPENDENCE (PERSONAL USE) AMENDMENT BILL 2021 PASSES

Today is an important day for the ACT, which becomes the first jurisdiction in Australia to decriminalise the possession of small quantities of certain common illicit drugs. This is a sensible step forward that all Canberrans should be proud of.

In February 2021, I presented the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill to the ACT Legislative Assembly because I knew that diverting people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and towards the health system was good policy. I am proud that my colleagues share this view and have confirmed it with this vote today.

The Bill's journey through the ACT Legislative Assembly has been accompanied by a small, yet disgraceful, number of conservative attacks that demonised an already marginalised community to score cheap political points. I am proud that the expert advice of health professionals has prevailed over this fear mongering and misinformation.

Canberrans have known that drug use is a health issue for a long time and today our laws finally reflect the values of our city. The passage of this legislation has only ever been possible because of the community's strong and unwavering support for a new approach.

The Bill does not take effect immediately, instead a one-year lead in period has been legislated to provide appropriate time for front-line responders and service providers to prepare for this new framework. I will be eagerly monitoring the ACT Government's work implementing the Bill and providing a health focused response to the harms that drugs cause in our community.

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