

## INVESTIGATING THE FEASIBILITY FOR A DRUG CONSUMPTION ROOM IN THE ACT

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### Background:

Drug consumption rooms (DCR) are facilities for people to legally use drugs under supervision to reduce fatal overdoses. DCR models have been successfully implemented in Sydney in 2001 and Melbourne in 2018. In 2020 the Burnet Institute was contracted by ACT Health to conduct a study investigating the need, feasibility, and appropriateness of establishing a DCR in the ACT.

### Methods:

We undertook four research activities: (1) a desktop review of the literature on DCR service models and drug-use in the ACT, (2) qualitative in-depth interviews (n=27) with stakeholders to explore the need and support for a DCR, (3) a quantitative survey of ACT residents who currently use drugs (n=101), and (4) 'snapshot' surveys of needle and syringe program clients (n=242) to identify recent drug use patterns, drug-related harms and perspectives on establishing a DCR in the ACT.

### Results:

Evidence indicates that recent overdose (19% of ACT IDRS participants in 2019), ambulance attendances (643 'other drug' cases and 219 opioid-related cases in 2019), and public drug use (between 14-24% of recent drug use episodes; 2019 IDRS) are prevalent and increasing in the ACT. AIHW data also shows that 56% of ACT residents support DCRs. Primary data collected indicated a strong intent to use a proposed DCR (84% among consumer survey participants and 64% among NSP snapshot survey participants). Sector stakeholders also expressed strong support regarding the appropriateness of establishing a DCR and frequently highlighted the importance of linking a DCR service to other medical and social services.

### Conclusion:

The establishment of a small DCR in central Canberra and surrounding areas was recommended to complement existing services. The proposed service would initially accommodate injecting drug use, with additional work required to scope the need and cost to supervise other routes of administration. Further community consultations on the findings and recommendations of the report are required.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** None