



# Alcohol and other drug treatment services in the Australian Capital Territory

*Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)  
2006–07*

## Highlights

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in 2006–07:

- 10 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided 4,504 closed treatment episodes.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 32 years. Of people seeking treatment in relation to someone else’s drug use, the median age was 52 years.
- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in closed treatment episodes (55%), followed by opioids (22%, with heroin accounting for 20%), cannabis (12%) and amphetamines (9%).
- More than one-third (36%) of treatment episodes were for assessment only as the main treatment type, a quarter (27%) for counselling and 16% for withdrawal management (detoxification).

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### **About this bulletin**

This bulletin summarises the main findings from the 2006–07 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) NMDS data for the ACT. More detailed information about the 2006–07 collection and its findings can be found in the publication *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2006–07: report on the National Minimum Data Set* (AIHW 2008). This report, together with further publications and interactive data, can be accessed online at <[www.aihw.gov.au/drugs](http://www.aihw.gov.au/drugs)>.

### **Scope of the AODTS–NMDS**

The agencies and clients that were in scope for the 2006–07 AODTS–NMDS collection were:

- all publicly funded (at state, territory and/or Australian Government level) government and non-government agencies that provide one or more specialist alcohol and/or other drug treatment services
- all clients who had completed one or more treatment episodes at an alcohol and other drug treatment service that was in scope during the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.

It is important to note that the AODTS–NMDS collection only includes pharmacotherapy clients when they receive both pharmacotherapy and another type of treatment (from the same treatment agency). Pharmacotherapy-only clients are reported under the National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data collection (NOPSAD).

For a complete list of clients and agencies excluded from the AODTS–NMDS, see Section 1.3 of the AODTS–NMDS 2006–07 annual report (AIHW 2008).

### **Collection count: closed treatment episodes**

The unit of measurement in this bulletin is the ‘closed treatment episode’. A closed treatment episode refers to a period of contact, with defined start and end dates, between a client and a treatment agency. It is possible that more than one treatment episode may be in progress for a client at any one time, therefore the number of closed treatment episodes captured in the AODTS–NMDS does not equate to the total number of persons in Australia receiving treatment for alcohol and other drugs.

## Treatment agencies

Throughout Australia, a total of 633 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies supplied data for 2006–07. Of these agencies, 10 were located in the ACT, of which nine were non-government agencies.

## Client profile

- In the ACT, there were 4,504 closed treatment episodes in alcohol and other drug treatment services reported in the 2006–07 AODTS–NMDS collection.
- The vast majority (96%) of closed treatment episodes in the ACT involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 4% involved clients seeking treatment in relation to another person's alcohol or other drug use.
- The overall proportions of male and female clients in the ACT (65% and 35% respectively) were almost identical to the national proportions (66% and 34% respectively). However, of those treatment episodes reported in relation to someone else's drug use in the ACT, female clients accounted for the majority (74% of episodes).
- In the ACT, the median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 32 years. Of people seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use, the median age was 52 years.
- One-third (32%) of closed treatment episodes in the ACT were for clients aged 20–29 years, and more than one-quarter (28%) were for clients aged 30–39 years.
- The proportion of closed treatment episodes involving clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin was slightly lower in the ACT than nationally (6% compared with 10%), but still higher than the overall proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, aged 10 years and over, in the Australian population (2.5%) (ABS & AIHW 2008). These figures need to be interpreted with caution due to the fact that the majority of Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use services or primary health care services are not included in the AODTS–NMDS collection.
- The majority (88%) of closed treatment episodes in the ACT were for clients born in Australia and close to 100% of treatment episodes were for clients whose preferred language was English.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral to treatment in the ACT (63% of episodes), followed by referrals from 'other' sources (9%).

## Drugs of concern

This section reports only on the 4,340 closed treatment episodes where clients were seeking treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use in the ACT.

### Principal drug of concern

- The 'principal drug of concern' refers to the main substance that the client states led them to seek treatment from the alcohol and other drug treatment agency.
- In both the ACT and nationally in 2006–07, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in closed treatment episodes (55% and 42% respectively).
- In the ACT in 2006–07, heroin was the second most common principal drug of concern, representing 20% of treatment episodes compared with the national figure of 11%. Note this represents a drop in heroin episodes both for the ACT (down 7%) and the nation (down 3%) since 2005–06.

**Table 1: Closed treatment episodes<sup>(a)</sup> by principal drug of concern, Australian Capital Territory and Australia, 2001–02 to 2006–07 (per cent)**

Principal drug of concern	Australian Capital Territory						Total (Australia) 2006–07	
	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04 <sup>(b)</sup>	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	41.6	40.3	22.4	42.7	45.4	55.3	42.3	59,480
Amphetamines	8.7	5.9	17.4	8.2	8.3	8.7	12.3	17,292
Benzodiazepines	2.1	2.1	3.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	1.6	2,298
Cannabis	11.3	15.2	29.5	18.6	15.4	12.2	22.8	31,980
Cocaine	0.2	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	448
Ecstasy	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.3	1.0	0.7	0.7	1,010
Nicotine	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.7	2,450
Opioids								
Heroin	8.3	20.7	20.2	27.4	26.5	20.0	10.6	14,870
Methadone	0.8	1.6	2.7	1.2	1.0	0.6	1.6	2,268
Morphine	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.9	1,299
Total opioids	9.3	22.4	24.8	28.9	27.7	22.1	14.4	20,196
All other drugs <sup>(c)</sup>	26.6	10.1	0.6	0.1	1.0	0.2	3.8	5,321
Not stated	—	3.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>2,958</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>4,206</b>	<b>4,529</b>	<b>4,340</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>140,475</b>

(a) Excludes treatment episodes for clients seeking treatment in relation to the drug use of others.

(b) In 2003–04, a data collection error resulted in the exclusion of one large service provider and hence the overall closed treatment episode number for the ACT is under-counted. Comparisons of data from this year with data from other collection years should therefore be done with caution.

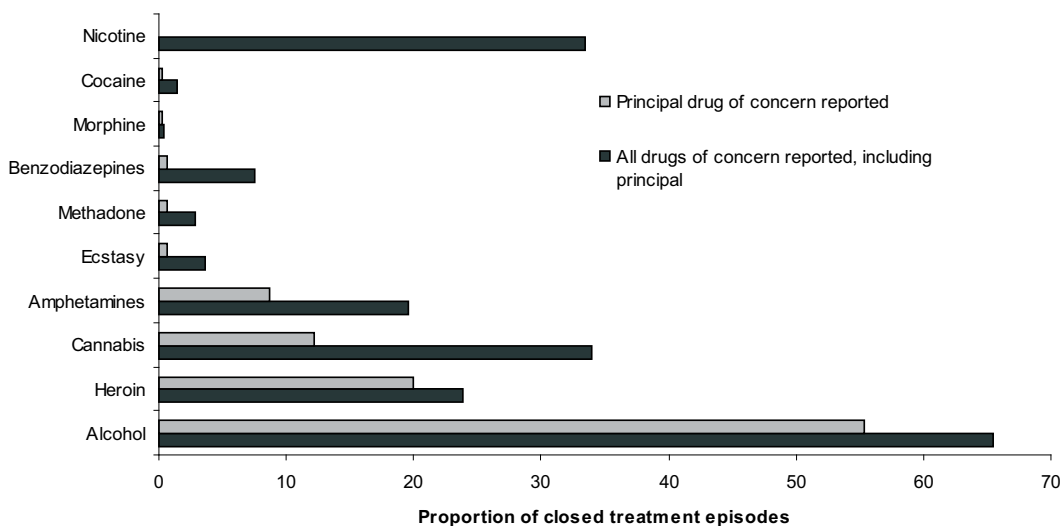
(c) Includes balance of principal drugs of concern coded according to the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.

- The ACT had proportionally fewer episodes for cannabis (12%) in 2006–07 than were provided across the whole of Australia (23% of all treatment episodes).
- Alcohol was the principal drug of concern for all age groups apart from the youngest (10–19 years), for whom cannabis was the most common drug of concern (44% of episodes). Alcohol was even more common among older age groups, making up 98% for over 60-year-olds.

### All drugs of concern

‘All drugs of concern’ refers to all drugs reported by clients including the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern (clients can report up to five other drugs of concern).

- Almost two-thirds (62%) of all treatment episodes in the ACT involved at least one other drug of concern (in addition to the principal drug of concern). From these episodes, 4,168 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded.
- A breakdown of all drugs of concern by drug type is presented below (Figure 1). For example, nicotine was reported as the principal drug of concern in less than 1% of episodes, but was reported as a drug of concern (either ‘principal’ or ‘other’) in 34% of treatment episodes.



**Figure 1: Closed treatment episodes by principal drug of concern and all drugs of concern, Australian Capital Territory, 2006–07**

## Alcohol

In the ACT, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 55% of closed treatment episodes in 2006–07. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 66% of episodes included alcohol.

Of the 2,399 episodes where alcohol was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2006–07:

### *Client profile*

- The majority (69%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 37 years (males 37 years; females 38 years).
- Around 5% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (for 9% of episodes Indigenous status was not reported).
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (68% of episodes), followed by referrals from 'other' sources (12%).

### *Drug profile*

- 54% of episodes included at least one other drug of concern. From these episodes, 1,800 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—44% were for nicotine, 26% cannabis, and 10% for amphetamines.
- The majority (68%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. About 6% of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 13% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past. Caution should be used, however, when interpreting data for 'injecting drug use' due to the high 'not stated' response for this item (14% of episodes).

### *Treatment profile*

- The most common treatment type was assessment only (41% of episodes), while counselling accounted for 26%.
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (71% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (28%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 5.

## Heroin

- In the ACT, heroin was the second most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 20% of closed treatment episodes in 2006–07. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 24% of episodes included heroin.

- Of the 866 episodes where heroin was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2006–07:

#### *Client profile*

- The majority (64%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 31 years (males 32 years; females 30 years).
- Around 5% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (for 2% of episodes Indigenous status was not reported).
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (76% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs designed to direct people charged with drug-related crimes into treatment (6%).

#### *Drug profile*

- All episodes involved clients whose usual method of use was injecting.
- 586 episodes (or 68%) included at least one other drug of concern. From these episodes, 925 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—32 % for nicotine, 26% cannabis and 16% amphetamines.
- The majority (76%) of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 21% involved clients who had injected drugs in the past (15% between 3 and 12 months ago and 6% 12 or more months ago).

#### *Treatment profile*

- The most common treatment type was assessment only (36%). Almost one-quarter (24%) of episodes were for 'other' treatment types.
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (71% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (27%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 7.

#### **Cannabis**

- In the ACT, cannabis was the third most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 12% of closed treatment episodes in 2006–07. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 34% of episodes included cannabis.
- Of the 531 episodes where cannabis was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2006–07:

#### *Client profile*

- The majority (71%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 25 years (males 25 years; females 24 years).



- Around 7% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (for 2% of episodes Indigenous status was not reported).
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (46% of episodes), followed by referrals from 'other' sources (12%).

#### *Drug profile*

- Smoking was the most common method of use (99% of episodes).
- 411 episodes (or 77%) included at least one other drug of concern. From these episodes, 681 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—34% were for alcohol, 29% nicotine and 18% amphetamines.
- The majority (65%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Nine per cent of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 17% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past. Caution should be used, however, when interpreting data for 'injecting drug use' due to the high 'not stated' response for this item (9% of episodes).

#### *Treatment profile*

- Counselling as the main treatment type accounted for 39% of episodes, while 24% were for assessment only and 20% were withdrawal management (detoxification).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (65% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (34%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 9.

### **Treatment programs**

- 'Main treatment type' is the principal activity that the treatment provider considers necessary for the client to complete their treatment plan for the principal drug of concern. Data presented in this section relate to clients seeking treatment for their own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use, except the sub-sections relating to principal drug of concern and treatment programs (which only include episodes for people seeking treatment for themselves).
- Of all closed treatment episodes in the ACT, the most common main treatment type was assessment only (36% of episodes), followed by counselling (27%) and withdrawal management (detoxification) (16%) (Table 2). Nationally, counselling was the most common treatment provided (39% of episodes), followed by withdrawal management (detoxification) (17%) and assessment only (15%).
- The proportion of episodes provided by treatment type has varied over time in the ACT. In 2006–07 the proportion of counselling episodes provided in the ACT rose from 16% in 2005–06 to 27%; withdrawal management accounted for fewer episodes (down from 22% in 2005–06 to 16% in 2006–07).



**Table 2: Closed treatment episodes by main treatment type, Australian Capital Territory and Australia, 2001–02 to 2006–07 (per cent)**

Main treatment type	Australian Capital Territory						Total (Australia) 2006–07	
	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06 <sup>(a)</sup>	2006–07	Per cent	Number
Withdrawal management (detoxification)	33.7	50.7	36.1	26.7	22.4	16.3	16.6	24,467
Counselling	14.8	15.8	47.2	27.7	16.3	27.4	38.7	57,017
Rehabilitation	9.5	7.4	13.1	5.2	5.0	4.8	7.4	10,950
Support & case management only	24.8	15.8	3.1	2.7	6.8	6.6	8.3	12,290
Information and education only	3.6	0.1	0.4	11.5	4.6	4.5	9.3	13,723
Assessment only	4.6	4.4	—	19.4	39.3	35.7	15.1	22,295
Other <sup>(b)</sup>	9.0	5.8	0.1	6.9	5.6	4.6	4.5	6,583
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>2,824</b>	<b>3,001</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>4,213</b>	<b>4,634</b>	<b>4,516</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>147,325</b>

(a) The number of closed treatment episodes for assessment only in 2005–06 may be over-counted due to the inclusion of diversion assessments and changes in reporting practices.

(b) 'Other' includes treatment episodes where the main treatment type was reported as pharmacotherapy.

### Assessment only

- Over one-third (36%) of treatment episodes in the ACT in 2006–07 were for assessment only. Of the 1,610 episodes where assessment only was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2006–07:

#### Client profile

- All episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (69%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 34 years (males 33 years; females 35 years).
- Around 5% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (74% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs (12%).

#### Treatment profile

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (92% of episodes), followed by residential treatment facilities (8%). The majority (94%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed.
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 1.

#### Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported by people who received assessment only (61% of episodes), followed by heroin (20%).

## **Counselling**

Counselling accounted for 27% of closed treatment episodes in the ACT in 2006–07. Of the 1,239 episodes where counselling was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2006–07:

### *Client profile*

- The majority (87%) of episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- Over half (62%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 33 years (males 32 years; females 36 years).
- Around 4% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (for 3% of episodes Indigenous status was not reported).
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (66% of episodes), followed by referrals from 'other' sources (13%).

### *Treatment profile*

- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (94% of episodes).
- The majority (53%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for episodes to end was that the client ceased to participate without notice to the service provider (41% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 35.

### *Principal drug profile*

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported by people seeking counselling for their own drug use (57% of episodes), followed by cannabis (19%).

## **Withdrawal management (detoxification)**

Withdrawal management (detoxification) accounted for 16% of closed treatment episodes in the ACT in 2006–07. Of the 736 episodes where withdrawal management (detoxification) was nominated as the main treatment received in 2006–07:

### *Client profile*

- All episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (64%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 33 years (males 34 years; females 32 years).

- Around 8% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (74% of episodes), followed by referrals from alcohol and other drug treatment services (6%).

#### *Treatment profile*

- Treatment always took place in residential treatment facilities.
- The majority (70%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for treatment to end was because the client ceased to participate against advice (19% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 7.

#### *Principal drug profile*

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (56% of episodes), followed by heroin (15%) and cannabis (14%).

## **How to find out more**

If you would like more detailed data about the ACT's alcohol and other treatment services please contact the AIHW to discuss your needs. The document *Alcohol and other drug treatment services NMDS Specifications 2008–09* outlines the process to be followed for unpublished data requests. This document is available from the AIHW website at <[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10575](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10575)>.

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