

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM**

Interviews with people who have been found in possession of small quantities of drugs by ACT Police  
Evaluation of the Operation of the Drug Law Reforms

Chief Investigators:

Professor Alison Ritter, Professor Anna Olsen, Chris Gough, Dr Hazel Blunden, Liz Barrett, Keelin O'Reilly

### **1. What is the research study about?**

You are invited to take part in this study. This research study aims to investigate the experiences of people who have been found in possession of a small amount of drugs of dependence or prohibited substances at some time since October 2023 and had an interaction with ACT Police including drug confiscation, caution or a diversion (i.e. received either a referral to a health education and information session with Canberra Health Service or a Simple Drug Offence Notice (SDON) specifying a fine, instead of attending court).

This study is part of a broader evaluation of drug law reform in the ACT under the Drugs of Dependence Amendment Act 2022.

### **2. Who is conducting this research?**

This study is being carried out by the following researchers: Professor Alison Ritter, Dr Hazel Blunden, Keelin O'Reilly and Liz Barrett at the University of NSW (UNSW), Professor Anna Olsen at the Australia National University (ANU) and Chris Gough (CEO of the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy – CAHMA).

**Research Funder:** This research is being funded by the ACT Health Directorate.

### **3. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

Before you decide to participate in this research study, we need to ensure that it is ok for you to take part. The research study is looking to recruit people who:

- Have been stopped by police for being in possession of a small amount of drugs at some time since October 2023
- Experienced some interaction with ACT Police such as a diversion (a referral to assessment and education session with a Canberra Health Service, or a Simple Drug Offence Notice (SDON) with a fine (or both)
- Are aged 18 years or older
- Can speak English and are willing and able to give informed consent for an interview.

Anyone not meeting these criteria will be excluded from the study.

### **4. Do I have to take part in this research study?**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage.

If you decide you want to take part in the research study, you will be asked to:

- Read the information carefully (ask questions if necessary);
- Sign and return the consent form if you decide to participate in the study;
- Take a copy of this form with you to keep
- Be involved in an interview where you will be asked about your experiences.

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### 5. What does participation in this research require, and are there any risks involved?

Interviews will take place either in person or over Zoom depending on your preference. Where they are in person, interviews will be offered at one of the three following locations:

- The consultation room at the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA), located in Belconnen, Canberra.
- A private meeting room in Civic Library (located in Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra ACT).
- A community room at Woden Library, located in Woden, Canberra, ACT.

During the interview you will be asked questions about your interaction with the police, your experiences of the education and information session or fine/Simple Drug Offence Notice as well as any previous history or perceptions you have of the criminal justice system, alcohol and other drugs treatment or health services. You will also be asked about any impacts or changes to your use of drugs, health and wellbeing and your suggestions for how the current system could be improved.

With your permission the research team would like to audio record the interview.

If you do not wish to be recorded but you would like to participate you advise the research team and written notes will be taken.

You will receive a reminder prior to the interview with the details of the date and time of the interview.

You should not tell us anything specific about any crimes that you have not been charged with or you have not been to court about. Please don't tell us things like names, dates or places of illegal activities. We cannot keep this information confidential if we:

- think you are going to seriously harm yourself;
- think you are going to seriously harm someone else;
- have been asked to provide this information by a court of law; and/or
- learn information concerning the protective safety of children.

Over many years of research, we have never been required by law to provide our research information to anyone else. If we are, we will do our best to tell you.

**Additional Costs and Reimbursement:** There are no costs associated with participating in this research project, nor will you be paid. However, you will receive a \$60 pre-paid Visa card to reimburse you for transport or any other expenses you may incur.

**Psychological Distress:** You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. You do not need to answer every question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed as a result of your participation in the research project, the research team will be able to arrange for counselling or other appropriate support. Alternatively, a number of free contactable support services are included at section 10. Any counselling or support will be provided by qualified staff who are not members of the research team. This counselling will be provided free of charge.

### 6. What will happen to information about me?

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By signing the consent form, you consent to the research team collecting and using information about you for the research study.

The research team will store the data collected from you for this research project for a minimum of 7 years after the completion of the research.

The information about you will be stored in a non-identifiable format where your identify will be unknown.

Information collected from you in an electronic format will be stored on a UNSW password protected OneDrive only accessible to the approved research investigators. The audio recordings of the Focus Groups will be stored on a UNSW password protected OneDrive only accessible to the approved research investigators after they have been transcribed by a professional transcription service. (Recordings will only be made available to the transcriber after a confidentiality agreement has been signed).

The information you provide is personal information for the purposes of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW). You have the right of access to personal information held about you by the University, the right to request correction and amendment of it, and the right to make a complaint about a breach of the Information Protection Principles as contained in the PPIP Act. Further information on how the University protects personal information is available in the [UNSW Privacy Management Plan](#).

### 7. How and when will I find out what the results of the research study are?

Results of the study will be included in a final evaluation report for the ACT Government. The Health Minister is required to table the report in the ACT Assembly.

### 8. What if I want to withdraw from the research study?

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. You can do so by completing the 'Withdrawal of Consent Form' which is provided at the end of this document or you can ring the research team and tell them you no longer want to participate. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect your relationship with UNSW Sydney, the ANU or CAHMA. If you decide to leave the research study, the researchers will not collect additional information from you. You can request that any identifiable information about you be withdrawn from the research project.

### 9. What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the research study?

If you have a complaint regarding any aspect of the study or the way it is being conducted, please contact the ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee:

#### Complaints Contact

Position	ACT Health HREC
Telephone	(02) 5124 3949

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<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:ethics@act.gov.au">ethics@act.gov.au</a>
<b>HC Reference Number</b>	2025.ETH.00069

### 10. What should I do if I have further questions about my involvement in the research study?

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query. If you require further information regarding this study or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in the study, you can contact the following member/s of the research team:

#### Research Team Contact Details

<b>Name</b>	Liz Barrett
<b>Position</b>	Research Officer
<b>Telephone</b>	02 9385 1779
<b>Email</b>	Liz.barrett@unsw.edu.au

#### Chief Investigator

<b>Name</b>	Alison Ritter
<b>Position</b>	Director, Drug Policy Modelling Program
<b>Telephone</b>	(02) 9385 0236
<b>Email</b>	Alison.ritter@unsw.edu.au

#### Support Services Contact Details

If at any stage during the study, you become distressed or require additional support from someone not involved in the research please call:

<b>Organisation</b>	Counselling Online
<b>Telephone</b>	<a href="tel:1800888236">1800 888 236</a>
<b>Online chat</b>	<a href="http://www.counsellingonline.org.au">www.counsellingonline.org.au</a>
<b>About this service</b>	Counselling Online provides a live, one-to-one counselling service over the internet to anyone with an alcohol or drug concern. All communication with the Counselling Online drug and alcohol counsellors is free and confidential and is available 24/7

<b>Organisation</b>	Lifeline
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<b>Telephone</b>	13 11 14 (available 24/7, Australia-wide)
<b>Online chat</b>	<a href="https://www.lifeline.org.au/">https://www.lifeline.org.au/</a>
<b>About this service</b>	Free crisis support service to provide short-term support for people who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping or staying safe. It is confidential one-to-one support, with a trained Lifeline telephone crisis supporter.

<b>Organisation</b>	National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline
<b>Telephone</b>	<a href="tel:1800250015">1800 250 015</a>
<b>About this service</b>	This hotline provides confidential support for people struggling with addiction. You can call the Alcohol Drug Information Service (ADIS) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

<b>Organisation</b>	13YARN
<b>Telephone</b>	13 92 76 (available 24/7, Australia-wide)
<b>Online chat</b>	<a href="https://www.13yarn.org.au/">https://www.13yarn.org.au/</a>
<b>About this service</b>	Free, confidential and anonymous crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to yarn to an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter. Crisis Supporters listen without judgement and provide a confidential, culturally safe space to yarn about your needs, worries or concerns.

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## Consent Form – Participant providing own consent

### Declaration by the participant

- ☐ I understand I am being asked to provide consent to participate in this research study;
- ☐ I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand;
- ☐ I understand the purposes, study tasks and risks of the research described in the study;
- ☐ I understand that the research team will audio record the interview; I agree to be recorded for this purpose.
- ☐ I provide my consent for the information collected about me to be used for the purpose of this research study only.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received;
- ☐ I freely agree to participate in this research study as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study and withdrawal will not affect my relationship with any of the named organisations and/or research team members;
- ☐ I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

### Participant Signature

Name of Participant (please print)	
Signature of Research Participant	
Date	

### Declaration by Researcher\*

- ☐ I have given a verbal explanation of the research study; its study activities and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

### Researcher Signature\*

Name of Researcher (please print)	
Signature of Researcher	
Date	

\*An appropriately qualified member of the research team must provide the explanation of, and information concerning the research study.

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.



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## Form for Withdrawal of Participation

I wish to **WITHDRAW** my consent to participate in this research study described above and understand that such withdrawal **WILL NOT** affect my relationship with The University of New South Wales, the Australia National University or the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA).

I am withdrawing my consent and I understand that any information already published and/or not linked to my identity cannot be withdrawn from the research.

### Participant Name

Name of Participant (please type)	
Date	

### The section for Withdrawal of Participation should be forwarded to:

CI Name:	Professor Alison Ritter
Email:	Alison.ritter@unsw.edu.au
Phone:	02 9385 0236
Postal Address:	UNSW, Kensington, NSW, 2052