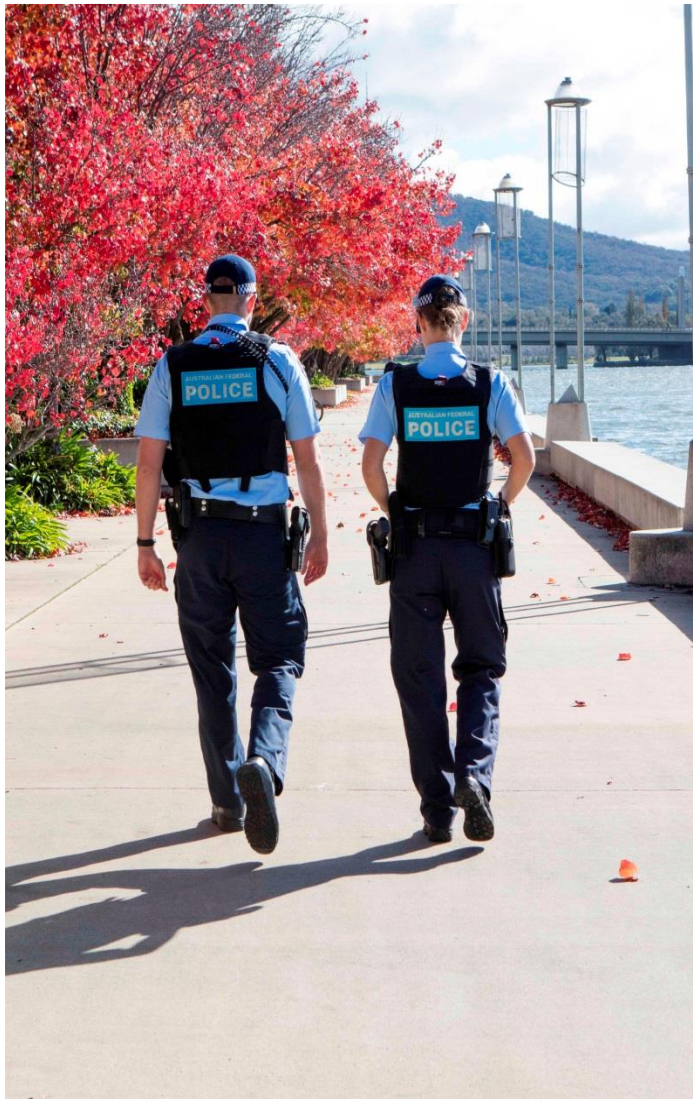


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Parliamentary Joint
Committee on Law
Enforcement

Inquiry into public
communication
campaigns targeting
drug and substance
abuse.

24 January 2020

Submission by ACT Policing

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Terms of Reference

On 16 October 2019, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement commenced an inquiry into public communications campaigns targeting demand for drugs and substance abuse, with particular reference to:

- a) the efficacy of different approaches to such campaigns, including:
 - i. 'shock advertising', informational campaigns and the use of social marketing;
 - ii. the use of campaigns aimed at various audiences, including, but not limited to, children at an age before they would typically become illicit drug users, Indigenous communities and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups; and
 - iii. international approaches;
- b) research and evaluation methods used to plan, implement and assess the effects of such campaigns;
- c) identifying best practice approaches to designing and implementing campaigns, including social media, digital channels and traditional advertising, to guide Australia's approach to drug demand reduction;
- d) the efficacy of the current and past National Drug Strategy in achieving demand reduction through public communications campaigns; and
- e) any related matter.

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Introduction

ACT Policing welcomes the opportunity to provide the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (the Committee) with information relevant to the inquiry into public communication campaigns targeting drug and substance abuse.

ACT Policing recognises the importance of media campaigns in addressing drug and substance abuse, and welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee.

ACT Policing's overall approach to drug and substance abuse

ACT Policing places the safety and wellbeing of the community first and foremost, and supports a whole-of-government response to reduce the social harm caused by drugs. ACT Policing's primary focus is on the detection, disruption and prosecution of those involved in the sale and supply of controlled drugs.

Although ACT Policing's key focus is on targeting sale and supply of illicit drugs, ACT Policing is committed to initiatives that improve community safety and support the ACT Government's commitment to the principles of harm minimisation.

In line with the new ACT Government's Ministerial Direction, a special area of focus for ACT Policing is drug harm minimisation, by continuing to focus on diverting lower level drug offenders from the criminal justice process. This is in accordance with the *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026* and the Government's policy settings such as the *ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021*.

ACT Policing's communication approach to drug and substance abuse

ACT Policing acknowledges that education and public messaging are important components of crime prevention and community safety. ACT Policing is committed to raising awareness and community safety through active engagement with the entire community and the delivery of effective safety messaging.

ACT Policing is focused on enhancing digital engagement to ensure ACT Policing continues to evolve in line with community expectations and in accordance with the Ministerial Direction. This is demonstrated through ACT Policing's launch of an official Instagram account in November 2019, expanding ACT Policing's social media presence beyond Facebook and Twitter. Instagram provides ACT Policing a platform for more positive engagement with audiences, in comparison to Facebook and Twitter. Instagram will not be used to call for information from the public or publish media releases, but instead focus on positively promoting our work, people and increasing two-way engagement.

Through the efforts of ACT Policing's Media and Public Engagement team, ACT Policing conducts ongoing social media messaging on a range of crime prevention and community safety issues, including illicit drug use and alcohol-fuelled violence. This is an overall

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approach to educate and raise awareness on key issues affecting the ACT community, rather than through specific targeted public communication campaigns.

ACT Policing generally utilises an integrated approach to media campaigns that target particular issues. ACT Policing uses a range of platforms to increase messaging, including face to face engagement, social media, promotional materials, media releases and transient advertising.

ACT Policing supports and amplifies illicit drug campaigns generated by partnering agencies such as the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate and ACT Crime Stoppers. Through ACT Crime Stoppers, ACT Policing also supports the federally funded *DOB in a Dealer* campaign. This campaign encourages the public to report information to Crime Stoppers regarding high-level drug dealers, grow houses, clandestine laboratories and drug-related activity in the ACT.

Below is a detailed case study of a joint ACT Policing-Crime Stoppers campaign which addresses several of the inquiry's terms of reference, in particular regarding best practice approaches.

Case Study: ACT Policing's Illicit Drug Campaign 2013

In 2013, ACT Policing and ACT Crime Stoppers conducted a three month campaign focused on illicit drugs. This campaign supported the operational efforts of ACT Policing's Drugs and Organised Crime Team which aimed to increase the quantity and quality of illicit drug related information reports to ACT Crime Stoppers.

Media and public engagement was crucial in demonstrating ACT Policing's commitment to removing illicit drugs from the streets, and in assuring the public that information provided to police is vital in identifying and arresting offenders. Innovative public information strategies and tactics were developed to gain media exposure for the campaign and to generate positive media attention.

A variety of media strategies and platforms were utilised to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign including:

- Four media conferences - each including an interactive display featuring drugs previously seized by police and visual samples of different types of drugs.
- Five media releases promoting and raising awareness about the campaign were published. A further eight media releases were distributed promoting positive news stories of drug seizures and dealer arrests. Each release included a message that linked back to the campaign.
- An experiential public event was held in Canberra's city centre where a makeshift grow house and drug lab was displayed. The display was supplemented with material

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outlining the indicative signs of drug manufacturing and a drug kit to educate the public on what illicit drugs look like as well as their effects. ACT Policing members distributed more than 500 postcards to the public at the event, encouraging the people to report any suspicious activity to Crime Stoppers.

- A Community Service Announcement (CSA) was developed to explain to the public the type of information to provide when making a report. The video was distributed via ACT Policing's social media channels and played on television screens in Canberra Connect shopfronts.
- Videos were uploaded to the ACT Policing YouTube channel including the CSA video, a launch video and two television media reports. At the end of the campaign, the promotional video was viewed 978 times and the launch video was viewed 323 times.
- A dedicated web page was created for the ACT Policing website and promoted via social media channels, paid advertising and in media releases. The ACT Policing website for the campaign landing page was viewed 1908 times.
- 300 posters with images of drug dealing or manufacturing were developed with tear off phone numbers for Crime Stoppers.
- Additional posters were developed to educate businesses on what to do if a customer was suspected to be manufacturing illicit drugs. The posters also contained a list of information required by Crime Stoppers. These posters were hand delivered by ACT Policing members.
- Direct engagement with businesses to educate what their responsibilities were, and what the legislation states about the sale and distribution of illicit drugs. These businesses were identified as having the potential to sell synthetic drugs.
- Two paid advertisements were placed on *The Canberra Times* website, appearing during peak viewing times to increase traffic to the campaign landing page. During the campaign, *The Canberra Times* advertisement received 90,000 views.
- Facebook advertising was used as it was a cost-effective medium, encouraging people to report information on drug dealers in the community. These advertisements were specifically targeted at the 18-30 year old demographic. The Facebook advertisement received 4 million impressions¹, resulting in 985 click throughs to the ACT Policing website.

¹ Impressions are the number of times a post from your page is displayed if it was clicked on/engaged with or not. For example, if someone sees a page update in their Facebook newsfeed and then sees that same update when a friend shares the post, this counts as two impressions.

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- 36 tweets were distributed to the public using the hash tag *#illicit drugs* in order to increase the exposure of the tweets.

ACT Policing worked closely with Crime Stoppers to disseminate information to the public. ACT Policing also partnered with key stakeholders such as Neighbourhood Watch, the ACT Health Directorate and the Australian Border Force (formerly the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service), to strengthen media messaging. The campaign demonstrated a collaborative approach to maximise the effect of reduce drug related crime in the community.

ACT Policing's Media and Public Engagement Team received a national award in recognition of this campaign.

Given the successful results of this campaign in 2013, ACT Policing adopted a targeted and integrated marketing approach, utilising a variety of media strategies and platforms as best practice to enhance the effectiveness of future public communication campaigns.

ACT Policing has implemented this similar targeted and integrated marketing strategy as a 'best practice' approach for future media campaigns, which has been demonstrated in more recent campaigns, such as the *Safe Summer* (2013-2018) campaign and the *What Would They Think?* (2019-2020) campaign. These campaigns are detailed below.

Any other related matter

New model of police service for ACT Policing

The ACT Government has invested \$33.9m over the next four years to enable ACT Policing to start transitioning towards a more community-focused and crime prevention model of police service. This investment marks the first step towards the delivery of a more visible, proactive and connected police service.

This new investment will enable ACT Policing to focus on education, disruption, prevention, diversion, community engagement and problem-solving activities which support key Government priorities and targets. The aim of the new model of police service is to prevent and disrupt crime before it is committed, to build capability and enhance ACT Policing's role in dealing with the most vulnerable in our community.

ACT Policing recognise that early intervention and education are key to reinforcing positive behaviours, and diverting vulnerable members of the community, including

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youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, away from harmful behaviours such as drug and substance abuse.

As ACT Policing transitions to a community-focused model of police service, there will be more emphasis on early intervention, engagement and education with the ACT community, which will also focus on harm minimisation.

ACT Policing has, and will continue to demonstrate ongoing commitment to reducing harm in our community through a range of communication campaigns which are detailed below.

Safe Summer Campaign

Since 2012, ACT Policing's *Safe Summer* campaign has supported ACT Policing operations over the summer months in an effort to reinforce positive behaviour in licenced venues and on the roads. The campaign aims to reduce alcohol and drug-fuelled violence, and road safety over the summer months by encouraging the Canberra community, especially young adults aged 17 to 35 years, to act and drive responsibly.

The *Safe Summer* campaign has traditionally been held over the three summer months (December to February) to coincide with the festive season and summer holiday period. ACT Policing has promoted safe attitudes and behaviours, particularly in relation to alcohol and drug use, and has increased community awareness around laws for alcohol and drug use including ACT Policing's role in enforcing these laws.

Over the years, the *Safe Summer* campaign has utilised a variety of media strategies and platforms as part of a best practice integrated approach. These included branded merchandise, strategic social media messaging, face to face engagement, print and advertising with content specifically focused on alcohol and drug use.

In recognition that an integrated approach is needed to increase the effectiveness of the campaign, ACT Policing worked closely with the ACT Government and industry, including the Australian Hotels Association ACT, Clubs ACT, licensees, Access Canberra and CBR NightCrew for messaging around the *Safe Summer* campaign.

The Territory Targeting Team (formerly known as the Regional Targeting Team) conducted proactive high-visibility patrols of all licensed venues in Canberra and worked closely with Clubs ACT, the Australian Hotels Association and Canberra's busier licensed premises to identify and address anti-social and unsafe behaviour.

The *Safe Summer* campaign utilised social media from various government agencies, including Health, Transport Canberra, Access Canberra in addition to ACT Policing, to maximise timely engagement with young adults. This collaboration strengthened the media messaging around these issues and enabled the messaging to be delivered to a broader audience. The *Safe Summer* campaign has produced positive results since it

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was introduced. These results are particularly evident in the 2017-18 financial year where the *Safe Summer* campaign saw:

- ACT Policing's *Safe Summer* Facebook messages reached 1,064,164 people.
- Alcohol-fuelled violent assaults decreased around the ACT by 29.2 per cent, with 155 reports to police down from 219 reports the year before.
- Reports of alcohol-fuelled violence in Canberra City reduced by 45.3 per cent compared with the previous year.

ACT Policing recognised the need to focus on alcohol and drug safety all year around, instead of solely in the summer period. In late 2019, ACT Policing recast the *Safe Summer* campaign, to the *What Would They Think?* campaign which is extended beyond the summer period. Rebranding and refocusing the campaign will provide longevity ensuring ongoing and repeated communications designed to raise awareness of alcohol and drug-related issues throughout the whole year.

The extension of the campaign is in line with the new ACT Government Ministerial Direction, by directly reducing and preventing alcohol-fuelled violence, with a key focus on enforcing liquor laws, and supporting drug harm minimisation in accordance with the *ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021*. The *What Would They Think?* campaign is described in further detail below.

What Would They Think? campaign

In December 2019, ACT Policing launched the *What Would They Think?* campaign. This campaign will run throughout the whole year to enable ACT Policing to continually educate and engage with the Canberra community on alcohol and drug safety. The campaign aims to encourage members of the community to think about their decisions and consequences, and the potential impacts on family members, friends and colleagues.

Following on from the launch, ACT Policing along with ACT Ambulance, Transport Canberra, Canberra Metro and CBR NightCrew were at City Walk on Saturday 14 December 2019 and reminded members of the community that their decisions, while alcohol or drug impaired, can have devastating and long lasting effects.

A display was also set up featuring vehicle wreckage recovered from a fatal single vehicle collision in 2014. The driver was found to have a combination of drugs and alcohol in his system at the time of the accident, the road was wet and he was speeding. The display was used to promote awareness of alcohol and drug safety, and to reinforce the fact that there are potentially life-altering consequences of the decisions people make when they consume alcohol or illicit drugs.

What Would They Think? incorporates a variety of different approaches to educate and raise awareness in the community including merchandise, strategic social media messaging

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and web content. The Territory Targeting Team will also use the tagline to brand their drug and alcohol presentations. These presentations are delivered to high schools and tertiary institutions across Canberra, to assist in the approach to drug demand reduction through early intervention strategies.

The effectiveness of this campaign will be assessed at the end of 2020.

Conclusion

ACT Policing acknowledges that a targeted and integrated marketing approach, through the use of variety of media strategies and platforms enhances the effectiveness of public communication campaigns targeting drug and substance abuse. Employing a variety of media platforms, including face to face engagement, social media, media releases and promotional materials in collaboration with partner agencies, increases the scope of the messaging and contributes to the overall effectiveness of a media campaign.

ACT Policing will continue to support public communication campaigns that focus on early intervention and drug harm minimisation strategies. ACT Policing continues to work collaboratively with partner agencies to reduce the social harm caused by drugs and other harmful substances.

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