MEDIA RELEASE

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Drug diversion changes a short-sighted, disappointing move

Queenslanders needing help with drug use will find it harder to access treatment, under planned changes to drug diversion laws.

The state government's *Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Antisocial Behaviour Bill 2026* will limit drug diversion to a single first offence, significantly watering down the existing, life-saving program.

AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim says that fundamentally misunderstands the reason behind drug diversion programs.

"The point of these programs is to divert people who have had multiple contacts with the police and legal system to health support and treatment.

"The vast majority of people charged with a first offence do not come back into contact with police or require treatment.

"This legislation risks seeing people with serious health issues punished with large fines or even jail time, which will not help them get better."

Dr Yim said it was important drug use be treated as a health issue with complex causes, not a criminal problem.

"After banning pill-testing, we're once again disappointed the government has chosen ideology over evidence-based science," he said.

"This approach will not meaningfully reduce drug use and will only add more costs onto the police, courts and taxpayers."

AMA Queensland also expressed concern about the plan to issue on-the-spot fines to people found in possession of illicit substances.

"This will overwhelmingly affect homeless Queenslanders, who necessarily live in public places," Dr Yim said.

"These are often people also suffering from mental health challenges, social isolation or other issues caused by poverty.

"Responding with punishment rather than compassion is incredibly short-sighted, as it will further reduce their ability to access the support they need."

AMA Queensland said the drug diversion program launched in 2024 had shown good results, and deserved increased time and investment, as did associated health services.

CEO of Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (QNADA) Rebecca Lang also expressed concern over the changes.

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"The data on the expanded program's operation over the first 18 months showed it was working as intended, so it's strange to see the government move to wind it back," Ms Lang said.

"We know that health responses are more effective in responding to individual drug use and call on the government to prioritise health-based responses."