

## Response to question on notice

### Questions on Notice Paper No 9

5 September 2025

Question No. 552

**Leanne Castley MLA:** To ask the Minister for Health

1. Does the Government collect information on the frequency of drug-affected presentations at public emergency departments; if so, (a) how many such presentations are made, and (b) what proportion of total presentations does this represent.
2. What is Government policy for managing these presentations, and are they prioritised over other patients for safety reasons.

**RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA** - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The ACT Government collects information on drug-affected presentations at public emergency departments (ED). Data from the last two years is as follows:

	2023-24	2024-25
Drug-related ED presentations	1,029	1,166
Proportion of drug-related ED presentations	0.66%	0.70%

Source: Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (IHACPA) submission for ACT ED dataset for 2023-24 and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) submission for ACT ED dataset for 2024-25.

Notes:

- a) Drug-related presentations include emergency department presentations where the principal diagnosis is related to drug use. The ICD-10-AM codes used are consistent with the AIHW methodology.
  - b) This data includes all emergency department presentations related to drug use, covering a wide range of substances and circumstances, and should not be interpreted in relation to any particular type of drug or usage.
2. All patients, including drug affected patients presenting to the ED, are treated in order of clinical urgency in accordance with the Australasian Triage Scale (ATS).

The ATS is a five-level system used in the ED to prioritise patient care, based on the urgency of their medical needs. It is designed to ensure that patients presenting to the ED are assessed and treated in order of clinical urgency. It categorises patients into five distinct levels, each with specific timeframes for assessment and treatment. This system helps manage patient flow and optimise the use of resources in busy emergency settings.

Presentations related to alcohol or other drug use can vary widely, encompassing acute trauma, behavioural disturbances, and a range of medical concerns such as chest or abdominal pain. If a patient is affected by alcohol or drugs (specifically experiencing acute intoxication), their care will be managed based on the specifics of their presentation.

As with any presentation, if there is risk of immediate harm to the patient or others, their care will be managed accordingly. However, prioritisation of care for these reasons must be balanced against other competing demands in the department.

**Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.**



**Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA**  
**Minister for Health**

**Date:** 3/10/25

This response required 12hrs 35mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$1,050.17.