



CAHMA media statement - Mr. Felipe Alvarez coronial inquest report 4th August 2026

Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA) acknowledges the release of the final report from the coronial inquest into the 2021 death of Mr. Felipe Esteban Alvarez and accepts its recommendations. CAHMA would like to acknowledge the tragic nature of Mr Alvarez's death and the hurt and suffering his family and friends have experienced over the past five years as a result of his loss. CAHMA offers its sincere condolences to the family and recognises the ongoing impact of their grief.

Since the inquest commenced, CAHMA has engaged constructively with the inquest process and has worked to assist the court's proceedings. There are several key recommendations and findings in the report relevant to the operation and governance of CAHMA. CAHMA accepts these findings and recommendations and has already taken significant steps to improve the quality of our governance and operations systems, including through formal accreditation processes undertaken in line with the provisions of the Australian National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services. CAHMA finalised its accreditation under the Australian Services Excellence Standard in 2022 and was re-accredited under this standard in October 2025. As part of this process, CAHMA worked with Access Canberra to ensure the organisation's compliance with ACT requirements for all staff working with alcohol and other drug (AOD) service users to hold current Working With Vulnerable People registrations. CAHMA is dedicated to implementing a process of continuous quality improvement and will continue to actively enhance the quality and safety of the services it provides to the people of Canberra and the surrounding region.

In addressing the recommendations of the report, the Executive Director Chris Gough said:

"We remain committed to ensuring the provision of best practice naloxone training to members of the ACT community, as well as maintaining a positive, welcoming service environment where people who use and have used drugs can get the support, assistance and resources they need to live healthy, connected and safe lives."

"A key recommendation of the report is for CAHMA to work closely with the AFP, emergency services and Canberra Health Services to ensure people who use drugs can feel safe reporting overdoses and other drug-related medical emergencies. CAHMA is committed to working in partnership to implement this recommendation as a crucial step in ensuring people who are experiencing an overdose can get the help they need as fast as possible."

Dr Anna Olsen, spokesperson of the CAHMA Board of Directors said:

"The CAHMA Board has gone through the report closely to understand what it means in practical terms for governance. We accept the recommendations for the organisation and the Board will continue to review CAHMA's governance processes in light of these recommendations."

"As an organisation focussed on continuous quality improvement and best practice, the CAHMA Board is committed to ongoing implementation and monitoring activities, because the safety of CAHMA's service users and staff is our primary priority."

"More broadly, the Board recognises that this tragedy highlights the importance of making sure that people who use drugs have accessible harm reduction services available to them, where they can find the support they need to improve their health and wellbeing and stay socially connected. We

aim to ensure that CAHMA continues to build on its current service offering with a view to achieving better health and social outcomes for the individuals, families and communities it serves."

Background on CAHMA

Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA) is a not-for-profit organisation that offers support programs and services to people who use drugs and people who use drug treatment services in the ACT. Details of CAHMA's programs and services can be found on our website: WWW.CAHMA.ORG.AU.

CAHMA pioneered Australia's first take home naloxone program in 2012, which has been independently evaluated. The evaluation concluded that CAHMA's naloxone program unquestionably saves lives, with 57 successful overdose reversals documented during the initial two years of the program. Naloxone programs have now been rolled out across Australia using the ACT's work as a foundation and naloxone is now nationally available for free through the federal government's Take Home Naloxone Program. In the last financial year, CAHMA trained 699 people in the use of naloxone and provided 635 naloxone kits. CAHMA also runs a postal naloxone program, where people can be trained online and have naloxone sent via the post. This postal service trained a further 78 people in the use of naloxone and gave out 146 naloxone kits in the last financial year.

Media Contact

Please direct further media enquiries to chrisg@cahma.org.au