



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Bill 2026

Submission number: 002

Submitter: Australian Multicultural Action Network

Date authorised for publication: 16 July 2026



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Submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Transport and City Services

Inquiry into the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Bill 2026

Submitted by:

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Date: 04/07/2026

Introduction

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry into the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Bill 2026.

AMAN supports the intent of the Bill to modernise legislation so that lawful medical cannabis patients are treated consistently with individuals prescribed other potentially impairing medications. The current legislative framework may unintentionally disadvantage people who are complying with medical advice while posing no measurable impairment to road safety.

However, legislative reform must continue to prioritise public safety while ensuring fairness, scientific evidence, procedural consistency and community confidence.

As an organisation working extensively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across the ACT, AMAN believes this Bill presents an opportunity not only to improve legislation but also to improve education, health literacy, police engagement and equitable access to justice.

The proposed reforms should therefore be accompanied by strong safeguards, evidence-based implementation strategies and comprehensive community education.

About AMAN

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) is a community-led organisation working with diverse multicultural communities throughout the ACT.

AMAN regularly partners with government agencies, health organisations, universities, emergency services and community stakeholders to deliver projects involving:

- public health
- mental health
- community safety
- multicultural engagement
- digital literacy
- health education
- social inclusion
- community resilience

Our work places significant emphasis on ensuring government policy can be understood, accessed and trusted by multicultural communities.

This submission reflects extensive engagement with culturally diverse communities, lived experience perspectives and public health principles.

Overall Position

AMAN supports the principle behind the proposed amendments.

The Bill appropriately recognises that:

the presence of THC alone should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of impaired driving where the substance has been lawfully prescribed and used.

This approach is more closely aligned with modern medical practice and contemporary evidence.

However, AMAN believes successful implementation requires additional measures beyond legislative amendment alone.

Key Principles

AMAN recommends that implementation be guided by six overarching principles.

1. Road Safety Must Remain Paramount

Road safety should remain the highest priority.

No legislative reform should reduce the ability of police to remove genuinely impaired drivers from ACT roads.

The distinction should remain between:

- presence of THC

and

- actual driving impairment.

This distinction is increasingly recognised internationally.

2. Fair Treatment of Medical Patients

Thousands of Australians legally use prescribed medications that may affect driving ability.

These include:

- opioids
- benzodiazepines
- sleeping medications
- ADHD medications
- antidepressants
- epilepsy medications
- medical cannabis

Medical cannabis patients should not be subjected to fundamentally different treatment where impairment is absent.

Legislation should focus on driving ability rather than merely detecting lawful medication.

3. Evidence-Based Decision Making

The Bill reflects an important shift toward evidence-based regulation.

Scientific research increasingly demonstrates:

THC may remain detectable long after impairment has ceased.

Consequently,

detectability

is not always equivalent to

driving impairment.

Future policy should continue to evolve alongside emerging medical and forensic evidence.

4. Equity Across Communities

AMAN works extensively with multicultural communities.

Many individuals already experience barriers involving:

- health literacy
- language
- trust in institutions
- navigating healthcare
- understanding medication requirements

Legislation should avoid unintentionally creating additional disadvantages for these communities.

AMAN's Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Develop a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign

Legislation alone is insufficient.

ACT Government should implement an education campaign explaining:

- what has changed
- what has not changed
- continuing responsibilities of drivers
- legal use of medical cannabis
- circumstances where driving remains prohibited

Materials should be available in:

- Easy English
- translated community languages
- video formats
- culturally appropriate formats

Recommendation 2

Develop Clear Police Operational Guidelines

Police officers require practical guidance to ensure consistent implementation.

Guidelines should include:

- assessing impairment
- recognising lawful prescriptions
- evidentiary requirements
- documentation
- decision-making framework

Consistency protects both community confidence and operational integrity.

Recommendation 3

Introduce Clinical Driving Advice Standards

Medical practitioners should have access to consistent ACT guidance regarding:

- prescribing
- counselling patients
- assessing fitness to drive
- patient education

Patients frequently receive differing advice.

A standardised framework would improve consistency.

Recommendation 4

Improve Multicultural Health Literacy

Many CALD communities have limited awareness regarding:

- prescription medicines
- driving obligations
- roadside drug testing
- legal responsibilities

AMAN recommends funding culturally tailored education delivered through trusted community organisations.

Community leaders can significantly improve understanding and compliance.

Recommendation 5

Collect Evaluation Data

The ACT should undertake ongoing monitoring following implementation.

Measures could include:

- number of roadside tests
- number of medical cannabis exemptions relied upon
- crash statistics
- impairment-related offences
- community awareness
- police operational feedback

Policy should continue to evolve based on measurable outcomes.

Recommendation 6

Establish an Independent Advisory Panel

AMAN recommends establishing a multidisciplinary advisory group including:

- medical practitioners
- road safety experts
- police
- researchers
- consumer advocates
- multicultural representatives
- disability advocates

This group could review implementation after 12 months.

Future Opportunities

AMAN believes the ACT has an opportunity to become Australia's leading jurisdiction in balancing:

- patient rights
- road safety
- scientific evidence
- public confidence

Rather than viewing this legislation solely as a transport issue, it should also be considered through:

- public health
- disability inclusion

- multicultural equity
 - preventative education
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Innovative Community Engagement Model

AMAN proposes the ACT Government establish a

"Safe Medicines and Safe Driving Initiative"

This initiative could include:

Community Road Safety Ambassadors

Training multicultural community leaders to educate local communities.

Digital Education Hub

Short multilingual videos explaining:

- legal responsibilities
- prescription medicines
- roadside testing
- impairment

Healthcare Partnerships

Joint education delivered through:

- GPs
- pharmacists
- pain specialists
- medical cannabis clinics

Annual Community Awareness Week

A collaborative campaign involving:

- ACT Policing
 - Canberra Health Services
 - Access Canberra
 - multicultural organisations
 - consumer groups
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Protecting Community Confidence

Public confidence depends upon transparency.

Community members should understand that:

the Bill

does not legalise impaired driving.

Instead,

it seeks to distinguish between:

lawful medical treatment

and

unsafe driving.

That distinction is essential.

The Role of Technology

Future reforms should consider emerging technologies capable of measuring impairment rather than merely detecting substance presence.

AMAN encourages ongoing investment into:

- impairment assessment technologies
- roadside cognitive assessment research
- evidence-based testing methodologies

This represents a longer-term opportunity for national leadership.

National Leadership

The ACT has historically demonstrated leadership in progressive health reform.

This Bill provides another opportunity to demonstrate that:

road safety,

health policy,

human rights

and

scientific evidence

can coexist within modern legislation.

The ACT can establish a model capable of informing future reforms across Australia.

Conclusion

AMAN supports the objectives of the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Bill 2026 while encouraging careful implementation supported by education, evaluation and ongoing stakeholder collaboration.

We commend the Committee for undertaking this inquiry and for recognising the importance of balancing community safety with equitable treatment of individuals who lawfully use prescribed medications.

The proposed amendments should not be viewed simply as a legislative change but as part of a broader opportunity to modernise road safety policy through evidence, compassion, public education and partnership with the community.

AMAN looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the ACT Government, health professionals, ACT Policing and community stakeholders to ensure that these reforms improve both road safety outcomes and public confidence across our diverse community.