

Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

committed to preventing tragedy that arises from illicit drug use

PO Box 36
HIGGINS ACT 2615
Telephone (06) 254 2961
12 November 2004

MEDIA RELEASE

Government study on 2000-01 heroin drought expected to be a whitewash

The long-awaited study, *“The causes, course and consequences of the heroin shortage”* will be released today, Friday 12 November, at the meeting of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in Brisbane. It is expected to tell the Federal Government what it wants to hear.

“It will seek to justify the Government’s line that law enforcement was responsible for heroin shortage from late 2000,” said Brian McConnell, President of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. “In fact:

- the evidence is clear that the principal causes were a severe shortage of opium in South East Asia brought about by a string of poor harvests from the mid-1990s and a booming demand in China;
- the Australian Federal Police Commissioner himself revealed in July 2001 intelligence that Asian crime syndicates had decided to push methamphetamines in Australia rather than heroin because there was a bigger potential market for a swallowed drug.”

“The Government’s study will not mention the forecast by the Office of Strategic Crime Assessments which predicted the heroin drought and flood of methamphetamines that accompanied it.”

“The study will ignore the fact that the methamphetamines came from the same source as the heroin and focus on the good news of the heroin shortage – the drop in overdose deaths and a small reduction in property crime.”

“It will pass over the increase in violence, escalating levels of psychoses caused by the stimulants and their rapid spread among young people.”

“The Government will point to the record drug seizures but police, when not deferring to their political masters, will tell you that high levels of seizures are almost always evidence of increasing drug availability.”

“The Federal Government refuses to show the drugs seized as a percentage of the estimated quantity of drugs on the street, which would provide a realistic measure of the effectiveness of law enforcement in controlling drugs. The former independent National Crime Authority estimated the percentage as no more than 12%.”

In 2002 Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform pointed out that the Federal Government was taking credit for the commercial decision of criminals. It has continued to do so.

Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform’s own study of the cause of the heroin drought *“Upheaval in the Australian drug market: the cause and impacts of the sudden heroin shortage and increased supply of stimulants in 2000-01”* by Bill Bush is available at www.ffdlr.org.au.

A summary of that study is at www.internationaldrugpolicy.org/factsheet4.pdf.

Contact: Author of FFDLR report (Bill Bush) (02) 6257 1786, 0439 020 146 (mobile) or Brian McConnell (02) 6254 2961, 0409 074 033