

## The Memorial Plaque

“...The blossoms are blossoming without you...”  
(Jennifer Meyers, “Joshua knew only the winter”)

TO ALL WHO LOSE THEIR LIFE FROM OUR  
EFFORTS TO SAVE THEM FROM DRUGS

“You have gone from earth,  
Gone even from the meaning of a name;  
Yet something’s there, yet something forms its lips  
And hits and cries against the ports of space,  
Beating their sides to make its fury heard.

“But I was bound, and could not go that way,  
But I was blind, and could not feel your hand.  
If I could find an answer, could only find  
Your meaning, or could say why you were here  
Who now are gone, what purpose gave you breath  
Or seized it back, might I not hear your voice?”  
(Kenneth Slessor, “Five Bells”)

16 December 1996

Erected by Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

*Permission by the publishers, HarperCollins, to print part of Kenneth  
Slessor’s poem is gratefully acknowledged.*

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We acknowledge that the ceremony today  
is taking place on Ngunnawal land.

Thank you to “Directions” and Stasia  
for their contribution to refreshments.  
and to ATODA for the ribbons.

If you wish to be notified of the next ceremony please leave your  
name and address in the book provided.

Further information concerning Families and Friends for Drug Law  
Reform (ACT) Inc. can be obtained by writing to  
PO Box 4736, HIGGINS ACT 2615, by phoning (02) 6254 2961  
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Web: [www.ffdlr.org.au](http://www.ffdlr.org.au)

# 16th Annual Remembrance

## Ceremony

*for those who lose their life  
to illicit drugs*

Weston Park, Yarralumla, ACT  
Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011  
12.30pm

**Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc.**  
*committed to preventing the tragedy that arises from illicit drug use*

## *Program*

**Musical item** – *Step by Step* - Waldemar Hills & Pete Seeger

**Welcome and Introduction** - Brian McConnell, President,  
Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

**‘Reflections’:** Kerel Pearce

**Musical item** – *Ad atat mili*

**Address:** Dr Andrew Leigh, MP, Federal Member for Fraser

**Remembrance of those who have lost their life to illicit drugs**

**Reading of names** – Rev’d Duncan Macleod, Presbytery Minister  
Canberra Region Presbytery, Uniting  
Church in Australia

**Placing of flowers at foot of memorial**

**Musical Item** - *Baba waian* – arranged by Rachel Hore

**Address:** Rev’d Duncan Macleod

**Musical Item** – *Stand by the shore* – traditional folk song

**Musical Items by the Union Voices**

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*Please join with us for refreshments.*

Please take the colours of the tree away with you in the form of one of the green and white ribbons that are available.

Similar ceremonies are held across Australia and in some European Cities.

## *Why Remember? - When will they ever learn?*

This is the sixteenth year that we have gathered together under this tree, around this memorial, bringing our loss, our memories and our reflections. Our loss is still as cruel and as sharp as the thorns on the tree. We are still overwhelmed with sadness as we remember a precious life that is no more: a life as full of promise as the fresh young leaves and as beautiful as the blossoms that are still forming. With all we have learnt these past 16 years, we ponder and we wonder why many young lives are still being lost.

We are still told what we were told then: that the person we loved would not have died had they taken full responsibility for their drug use, entered a treatment program and kicked their habit. - *When will they ever learn?*

To protect young people from drugs, we were told that drug use must continue to be a crime. - *When will they ever learn?*

We were told then and we are still told that someone comes to their senses only when they hit rock bottom and that rock bottom, including imprisonment, is not the crushing of hope but an opportunity we should embrace. - *When will they ever learn?*

When will they ever learn that there is less drug use in countries that have treated drug use as a social and mental health problem?

When will they ever learn that addiction to illicit drugs is no worse and in some cases less severe than addiction to drugs that are legal?

When will they ever learn that the drug trade thrives because of and not in spite of prohibition and that the wealth of the drug trade dwarfs the resources that even the richest states throw at it?

When will they ever learn that the power of drug money infects our society and corrupts all it touches?

When will they ever learn that we share a common humanity with those who have become dependent on illicit drugs?

This memorial helps break a silence of prejudice and ignorance which has left many to bear their grief in painful isolation. We may not all fully understand or agree with the path some chose but that choice should not have made them an outcast or have led to their death.

The locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) under which we are gathered was chosen because of its particular associations for the family of one of our members whose brother died in 1996. The tree then was bare. Its thorns stood out against the winter sky. But spring has brought new growth and white blossoms. Let its beauty and the confidence in its renewal inspire us.

The plaque and stone will continue to stand watch by the tree during the coming seasons.