

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.

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

Thank you to
ATODA for the ribbons and organising assistance.
CatholicCare for help with refreshments.

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 7186, KALEEN ACT 2617, by phoning (02) 61697678 or by emailing mconnell@ffdlr.org.au.
Web: www.ffdlr.org.au

20th Annual Remembrance

Ceremony

*for those who lose their life
to illicit drugs*

Weston Park, Yarralumla, ACT
Monday, 26th October, 2015
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: Under the Milky Way (The Church)

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

'Reflections': Tony Trimmingham, parent who has lost a child and
CEO of Family Drug Support

Musical item: I can't help falling in love (Elvis Presley)

Address: Kate Carnell

Remembrance of those who have lost their life to illicit drugs

Reading of names: Rev'd Graham Long, Pastor, the Wayside
Chapel

Placing of flowers at foot of memorial

Musical Item: Dear Someone (Gillian Welch)

Address: Rev'd Graham Long

Musical Item: Sunny Afternoon (The Kinks)

Musical Items by "The Converted"



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?

20 Years ago, this rock, this tree and this site were chosen for what they represented of the experience of some here today and many, many, who, grievously, are not. In short, we are amidst a collection of potent symbols. 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 is a living thing which, like those we are remembering, is a creature of different moods and seasons. In winter the thorns are silhouetted dark against cold skies but winter always gives way to spring. Tender green shoots burst into new life and hope and blossoms cascade in loveliness: we are gathered here amidst hope, regeneration and beauty that sadly have sometimes lain dormant and unrecognized until too late. Symbols of beauty and hope thus infuse our site here in the midst of Canberra, the National capital, which is a symbol of unity and pride of a whole nation.

So this memorial and this day were chosen as a message to a nation to help break a silence of prejudice and ignorance that has left many to bear their grief in an isolation tinged with shame. Remembrance here has helped many cope with anger too: anger at the lack of help, at the pressures on us to abandon those we loved - particularly where we yielded.

The memorial is also a symbol of defiance. It affirms that the deaths of most if not all those for whom we mourn today were avoidable. They met their death along a path they chose - a path that we may not understand or agree with - but certainly a path that should not have made them an outcast or have led to their death.

The ephemeral symbols of spring and beauty are joining the symbol of endurance in the form of this granite boulder. There are those among us who for 20 years have not ceased from challenging the dying of the light and proclaiming the injustice and stupidity at the heart of our suffering. It is bitter for us to watch the repeat of the fatal mistakes that inspired us to gather together 20 years ago to form Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. Much has happened in this country and around the world to show that declaring young people criminals is profoundly unjust and counter-productive. Our policy is making drugs more available to our kids. Once again, avoidable opiate overdose deaths alone are outnumbering the traffic accident toll, not to mention the deaths from suicide and disease that result from labelling drug users the leper outcasts of our society.

There comes a time when things reach a tipping point: when the apparently impossible suddenly comes about; when symbols of endurance and stoicism join with those of spring and hope to break through. We have faith that the day of the last avoidable drug related death is closer than we might think.