



FAMILIES & FRIENDS FOR DRUG LAW REFORM

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2018

Submissions and Comments

Bill Bush has written two submissions over the past months

The Criminal Code and Other Legislation Amendment (Removing Commonwealth Restrictions on Cannabis) Bill 2018 - Bill has had an invitation to appear before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee this month and will be appearing with Joan Westaway. The Bill that the committee is considering seeks to lift all Commonwealth restrictions on cannabis. That will not of itself alter State and Territory law which are the principal vehicles by which cannabis is regulated and criminalised. However an aspect that would be useful to give oral evidence about is the extent to which the existing criminalisation of cannabis impacts on access for the treatment of medical conditions and research.

Comments on the draft ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021.

This plan overwrote the 2015/2019 drug strategy which had reached its point of finalisation. The new strategy has omitted much of the progress which had been made under previous strategies. The aspirational measures such as a heroin on prescription for those severely addicted and a trial of hydromorphone

no longer appear in the strategy. Comorbidity is also seriously under emphasised in the existing draft. FFDLR's comments also include the need to address the concerns of prison officers around the implementation of an NSP in the prison.

Lunchtime forum

Guest Speaker: Matt Blundell, Community Ambassador for RU OK? will talk about the difficult but important issue of suicide prevention.

Tuesday 28 August, 12.30pm—1.45pm

Main Hall, Hughes Community Centre, Wisdom St, HUGHES ACT. Cost \$2 All welcome.

Presented by Canberra Mental Health Forum, U3A and COTA

FFDLR meeting

Date: Thursday 23rd August

Meeting at 7.30pm speaker at 8.00pm
St Ninian's Uniting Church Hall, cnr Brigalow and Mouat Sts, Lyneham

SPEAKERS: Anna McKenry and Kerry Fitzroy

TOPIC: Come and hear from Karralika Programs Clinical Services Director, Anna McKenry, and Community Services Program Manager, Kerry Fitzroy, about their range of residential and community based programs supporting adults and families in the ACT and surrounding NSW region. They will also share some information about new programs being delivered in the community to extend the range of treatment and support options available in the region.

Enquiries to 62571786 or 61697678.

Everyone welcome

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John Menadue Series on Drug Law Reform

John Menadue, during the first week in August, posted a series of articles on Drug Law Reform on his blog – “Pearls and Irritations”. The contributors came from many disciplines – former politicians, academics, public servants, the medical profession, public health, senior public servants. All have had experience of our drug policies from different approaches over a long period of time and all understand that prohibition drug policy has failed.

Jennifer Doggett wrote in Croakey choosing the following two takeaway messages which encapsulated the views of the series:

“Drug law reform is also about fairness. Just as it was unfair in the past for the majority to punish people with minority sexual preferences, so too is it unfair now for the majority to punish people with minority drug tastes.” **Dr Alex Wodak**

“Drug policy should be shaped by the values and strategies of social welfare and health. Of course, it is about justice. Not criminal justice, but practical justice acted out in the lives of marginal and devalued others.” **Professor Ian Webster**

Two members of FFDLR were invited to submit an article –
MARION McCONNELL. The long road to drug law reform

Marion McConnell, OAM, and her late husband Brian were founding members of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform, following the death of their son to a heroin overdose.

BILL BUSH. High drug incarceration – harms manifest and benefits hard to perceive

Bill Bush, formerly an international lawyer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is currently president of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform, of which he has been a member since the latter part of 1995.

Other contributors included:

ALEX WODAK. Drug policy: prohibition and punishment is just not effective

Dr Alex Wodak AM is a physician and was Director of the Alcohol and Drug Service at St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney from 1982 until he retired in 2012. He is now President of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation and a Director of Australia21.

ANN SYMONDS. Drug reform: The politics of social change

Ann Symonds, AM, was a Member of the NSW Legislative Council from 1982 to 1998 and has had a long interest and

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Johann Hari coming to Australia

Drug Policy Australia is sponsoring Johann Hari to appear at the **Melbourne Town Hall** to talk about **Drugs, Depression, Stigma and Addiction** on **Thursday 20 September from 6.30pm to 9.30pm.**

Tickets available from https://www.drugpolicy.org.au/johann_hari_melbourne_forum_20_sept_2018

Johann is the best selling author of *Chasing the Scream* and *Lost Connections*.

New York Times best-selling author Johann Hari believes that there is a better way. Johann tells the hidden story of the war on drug users, and what really causes both depression and addiction. His books show how stigma and prejudice have obscured some of the most significant human rights and social justice issues of our time.

Johann will also be appearing in Canberra on Wednesday September 19th, 8pm at the Playhouse organised by ATODA.

Free tickets available to FFDLR members and families. Contact Marion if interested—
mcconnell@ffdlr.org.au

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deep involvement in drug and prison law reform, and related social issues.

CHRIS PUPLOCK. The evidence for drug policy reform is clear

Chris Puplick, AM, is a former Liberal Party Senator in the Australian Parliament with a long interest and involvement in public policy, particularly in relation to human rights and social justice.

GEOFF GALLOP. The politics of drug decriminalisation

Emeritus Professor Geoff Gallop, AC, was a Member of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly from 1986 to 2006. Amongst other distinguished roles in politics, he was Premier of Western Australia from 2001 to 2006.

GINO VUMBACA. At last, a government sanctioned pill testing program

Gino Vumbaca is President of Harm Reduction Australia and a member of the STA-SAFE Consortium.

HELEN TYRRELL. Grasping the nettle: Prisons, drug use and the law

Helen Tyrrell is the CEO of Hepatitis Australia and a Harm Reduction Australia advocate.

IAN WEBSTER. Drug policy and justice

Emeritus Professor Ian Webster, AO, was Professor of Community Medicine from 1975 to 1989, and Professor of Public Health from 1990 to 2001, at the University of NSW. He has been involved in a wide range of organisations and public affairs related to community health.

KEITH HAMBURGER. Drugs policy – punishment alone is not the answer

Keith Hamburger AM had extensive senior executive experience in the Qld Public Sector including Deputy Director General (Corrective Programs), Department of Welfare Services, CEO of the Department of the Public Service Board and Director General of the Qld Corrective Services Commission 1988 – 1997.

MICHAEL HART. Drug policy – an addiction to failure

Michael Hart is a former senior Commonwealth Public Servant, ASIO intelligence analyst and Chief Analyst of the NSW ICAC.

MICK PALMER. The Blind Eye of History: from policing alcohol prohibition to policing drug prohibition

Mick Palmer, AO, was Commissioner of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services agency (1988-1994) and Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police (1994-2001).

PETER BAUME. Drug policy: None so blind

The Honourable Emeritus Professor Peter Baume A.C. is a facilitator in Medicine at the University of New South Wales. He is a physician, a former Senator, a former Minister, a former cabinet Minister, a former Professor of Community Medicine and a former university chancellor.

RALPH SECCOMBE. Production of illicit drugs - the balloon effect

Ralph Seccombe is a former official of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and of the then United Nations International Drug Control Program (now the UN Office on Drugs and Crime), for which he was Field Adviser in Pakistan. He published "Squeezing the Balloon: international drugs policy" (Drug and Alcohol Review, 1995) and "Troublesome Boomerang: Illicit Drugs Policy and Security" (Security Dialogue, 1997). ralphseccombe.com

These articles can be found at <https://johnmenadue.com/john-menadue-drug-reform-series/>.

Pass the link on to your friends and especially to your parliamentary members and media contacts.

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**We're on the web:
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Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform began in March 1995 following the death by overdose of eight young people in Canberra. At the request of one father, Michael Moore, then Independent Member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, called a meeting to include families who had been affected. Forty people attended this first meeting which was the beginning of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. All in attendance believed that the drug laws were more the problem than the solution and called for change. They wanted laws and policies that caused less harm. They wanted addiction to be treated as a health and social issue not a law enforcement one. They believed that the huge profits made by the illegal trade made drugs more available to their kids. Their efforts continue today. If not already please consider becoming a member via the website ffdlr.org.au.

World Hepatitis Day

Former ACT Health Minister and outgoing President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, Michael Moore AM renewed calls for a Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) in the ACT's prison when he delivered the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) World Hepatitis Day Oration on Tuesday 24th July in the Reception Room at the ACT Legislative Assembly

Norway to trial Heroin Prescription

According to the Ministry of Health, the government plans to trial the prescription of heroin to severely dependent users. The aim is to help drug dependent people who have not benefited from auxiliary programs to a better quality of life. Norway has one of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in Europe. The issue of heroin prescription programme should begin no earlier than 2020 according to the Ministry. The Norwegian Parliament decided late last year to decriminalize drugs. It followed the example of Portugal. There, the number of drug deaths has significantly decreased in the past 17 years.

23rd Annual Remembrance Ceremony

This will be held on **Monday 29th October** at 12.30pm at the memorial rock, Weston Park, Yarralumla, ACT. This is a time when we gather together under the Black Locust tree to remember all those lives lost to drugs. Many of us realise that it is not the drugs so much that have taken their lives but the drug policies that cause much of the harm. Each year we hope for an end to the unnecessary deaths but still more names are added.

If you have a loved one you would like remembered at the ceremony this year please email Marion on mconnell@ffdlr.org.au or phone 61697678 with name, year died and age.

