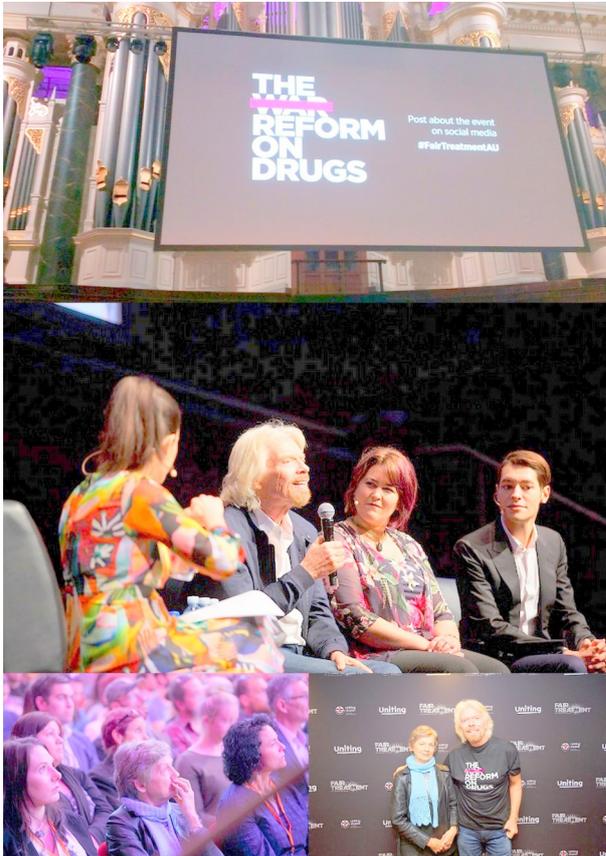




FAMILIES & FRIENDS FOR DRUG LAW REFORM

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2018



Uniting's Fair Treatment campaign launch with Sir Richard Branson at the Sydney Town Hall on Friday 12 October with over 2,000 people in attendance.

Get behind Uniting's Fair Treatment Campaign by Tweet and Like on Facebook
#FairTreatmentAU @FairTreatmentAU

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Something different for the Remembrance Ceremony



This year we are inviting you, if you wish, to bring a pair of shoes to the ceremony that can be laid out to form a pathway. The idea is a symbolic one - to draw attention to the need for more understanding and less marginalising of those who walk the path of isolation, rejection and marginalisation because of their dependence on drugs and for their families and friends. Simply it is asking others to symbolically walk in their shoes for a moment or two.

It can be shoes that belong to you or to your loved one or a friend who has died or they can just be a pair of shoes.

Come a little early to the ceremony so you can lay them on the pathway.

PLEASE NOTE:

No meeting in October.

AGM and BBQ

Thursday
22nd November, 2018
6.00pm - BBQ
7.30pm - AGM

Yearly financial report and President's report will be available

Venue: Marion's home (contact Marion for address)
Meat and salad provided.
Please bring a sweet and drink.

RSVP: 19 Nov to Marion

Pill Testing by Bill Bush

23 years down the road of drug law reform, I sometimes wonder whether we have been talking to the deaf. That was my reaction to the response of the New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, to the death on 15 September of two young people following the Sydney dance festival Defqon.1. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting of police noted that a further thirteen attendees were currently receiving treatment for drug-related issues. Over 700 punters sought help from medical personnel.

The Premier's immediate reaction was that such events should be shut down: "I never want to see this event held in Sydney or New South Wales ever again — we will do everything we can to shut this down."

She seemed to take umbrage that the organisers had broken their word: "every assurance was given to those attending that it was a safe event":

And of course she added firmly that [pill-testing is not the answer to the issue of drug use at festivals](#).

You have to doubt the capacity of anyone to lead a government who doesn't "get it" that:

it is impossible for police to detect and interdict every little pill at a music festival;

that the illegality of the substances hands their distribution to criminals;

that their illegal status adds an enticing aura of risk, enhancing their attraction to young risk-takers. Rendering drug

use boring is the most effective disincentive to risk taking; and

the prospect of being confronted by police and sniffer dogs prompts those who have invested in pills to indulge in the highly dangerous practice of downing them in one fell swoop.

It is beyond my comprehension how the adoption of effective and humane drug policies can be portrayed as a left wing or right wing issue. Don't politicians of all persuasion have children? Are they prepared to see their own child arrested, prosecuted, expelled from school, disqualified from certain careers and overseas travel to countries like the United States?

Perhaps they imagine that their parenting is so impeccable that no child of theirs would ever dabble with drugs. The child from any family is vulnerable. As well as those who are risk takers, children who are anxious or depressed are attracted to drugs to cope with their perceived inadequacies or to be accepted by a peer group.

The ACT has demonstrated in Australia what is known from many other countries, that pill testing at dance festivals is feasible and effective in dissuading those attending from consuming drugs laced with substances that they did not expect.

Sure, pill testing does not eliminate all risks associated with pill consumption but in what other area of public policy do our legislators

purport to act as a nanny to eliminate all risk? They have the good sense to know that prohibition of dangerous substances like alcohol (which causes nearly [6,000 deaths](#), many of them young) and tobacco ([almost 19,000](#) a year) will be ineffective. They would never contemplate the banning of driving (our roads killed 1,225 in 2017). The aim of good government is to reduce those harms by regulation and taxation and a large raft of road safety measures. The same approach should be taken to minimise the harms associated with music festivals. It's therefore irresponsible for Berejiklian to rule out pill testing.

It is some consolation that she appears to have modified her position. She has established a panel of experts to advise how festivals can be made safer. One might cynically suspect that the influence of the music industry, aghast at the prospect of no more music festivals, may have had more political purchase than the well-being of foolish young patrons.

In spite of the successful trailblazing exercise in Canberra earlier this year and the bipartisan in principle support in the Victorian drugs enquiry for pill testing, the practice is far from accepted as a standard feature of music festivals even in the ACT. The National Capital Authority, answerable to the Commonwealth government, has denied permission for pill testing to be conducted at the [Spilt Milk Festival at](#)

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Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc
invites you to its

23rd Annual Remembrance Ceremony

for those who lose their life to illicit drugs

Monday 29th October, 2018

12.30pm - 1.30pm

Weston Park, Yarralumla, ACT

to take place at the dedicated memorial located on the right of Weston Park Road opposite Prescott Lane junction.

Supported by ATODA and Uniting

Speakers include:

- Gordon Ramsay, ACT Attorney General
- Carlin Kensey Scott, Chaplain with Uniting Resilient Families and Communities
- Ann Finlay, family member

Music by Credo Quarter

Refreshments will be served following the ceremony

Reading of Names.....
If you have a family member or friend who has lost their life to illicit drugs and would like them remembered by name at the ceremony please phone Marion on 01697678 or email mcconnell@fdlr.org.au

Website: www.fdlr.org.au → email: mcconnell@fdlr.org.au → Twitter: @fdlr

Long Walk To Treatment



The Long Walk To Treatment is our primary campaign activation in advocating for AOD treatment reform.

It aims to:

- Highlight the evidence behind having world class AOD treatment for people battling addiction, and where the current gaps are.
- Generate public support for systemic treatment reform (and paving the way for broader policy reform).

Ted Noffs “Take Control” Campaign

This campaign was launched at the National Press Club on 25 September and attended by Marion and Pat from FFDLR. Excellent speeches were given by Matt Noffs and Mick Palmer, former AFP Commissioner.

The message was that we need our leaders, not criminals to take control for safer, saner drug laws.

Our drug laws are hurting people. Our governments leave drugs to an uncontrollable black market run by criminals and gangs. We’re not going to stand for that anymore.

We have a plan. Sign the petition for safer, saner drug laws. Together we will demand our leaders act and support our common sense plan.

We’ll demand that state and federal governments take control of drug use through a health and safety approach.

We’re going to take back control. The more people who join us the more powerful we will be.

You are asked to sign a petition to the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers insisting that it is governments responsibility to fix the problem. It’s time to get drug use under control by putting health and safety first. The petition can be found here:

<https://www.takecontrol.org.au/sign-the-petition/>

Our volunteer—Genevieve

Recently Bill, Mary, Joan and I enjoyed lunch at the Bungendore Woodworks Café with our volunteer, Genevieve to say thank you for the 12 months’ service she has given to our organisation.

Genevieve has been a great help to me especially with the website but also other IT issues.

Genevieve has assured me that she is still contactable if I need help and for this I am grateful.

It has been most helpful having Genevieve give a couple of hours each week and I will miss her.

We are pleased that Genevieve now has a paid job and we wish her well into her future.

Marion

Dr Tanaski speaking at the Canberra Drug policy Series at the Legislative Assembly on 15 October.

Australia 21

Australia21 has produced four reports on drug issues. Australia21 is a non profit body, which specialises in recalcitrant policy issues which are important to the future of Australian Society. It’s fifth report on the social harms caused by drug policy will be released soon. This will involve more people coming to an understanding for the need for change. We look forward to this report.

Bill and Marion had input into this report.



From left, Bob Douglas, Australia21; Marion McConnell, FFDLR; Bill Bush, FFDLR and Alex Wodak, ADLRF at the Sydney Town Hall on 12 October.



Uniting's Fair Treatment Campaign

This campaign was launched at the Sydney Town Hall on Friday 12th October. It was a packed auditorium with over 2,000 people attending. Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group and a member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP), Dr Khalid Tinasti, Executive Secretary of the GCDP and Marianne Jauncey, Director of the Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) were interviewed on stage by Jan Fran from SBS The Feed. Rev Simon Hansford, the Moderator, of the NSW/ACT Synod welcomed the gathering and noted that the numbers attending these events is a clear sign that the general public is passionate about this issue. "The Synod's stance", said Simon, "is to view use as a health and social issue rather than a criminal one and advocate that our policy makers do the same."

During the discussion Richard Branson related his experience with Boy George and drug use that began his understanding that "criminalising drug use is wrong – if someone has a problem and is willing to get help the last thing that should happen is any possibility of the law getting involved".

Marianne told us that 1.5 million have visited the Supervised Injecting Centre since its inception 16 years ago with 8,000 overdoses and no deaths. It also gives people a chance at a next step of connecting them with health opportunities.

It was heartening to hear Dr

Tinasti say that in 2011 the Global Commission on Drug Policy highlighted the point that the problem was not only with drugs but the drug policy that has been put in place. It was great to at last hear more people saying what FFDLR have been on about for over 20 years- that prohibition drug policy causes more harm than the drugs themselves

Three videos of personal stories were interwoven with the panel. The first was Marion McConnell then Liz and Shantall. Liz had left home as a teenager and lived years on the street before her life was turned around after she got into contact with Uniting's medically supervised injecting centre. The third person featured was Shantall, still struggling to exist with her kids and drug dependence in drought afflicted Dubbo where she lives without a car 400 km from the closest treatment service.

"It (prohibition) is strong because all countries agreed with prohibition. Fifty years of laws plus media propaganda plus it gets into people's system and everyone started to integrate that stigma", said Dr Tinasti

When asked what their message to politicians would be the panellists answered as follows:

"To try to persuade politicians to treat drugs as a health problem not a criminal problem", responded Richard Branson.

"To just not to be interested in it today but to stay interested

in it .. We need you to be interested today, next week and next year", added Marianne Jauncey,

"No pathway to harm reduction or to effective treatment without decriminalisation and ending social stigma and discrimination", replied Dr Tinasti.

ATODA'S Drug Policy Series

This series began with A Drug Policy Conversation with Johann Hari on 19th September at the Canberra Playhouse. Again the Playhouse was packed with over 500 in attendance to listen to Johann talk about depression, drug use and the importance of being connected. It was amazing to see so many people interested in drug policy. Carrie, CEO of ATODA, was a very talented panel leader.

The second event was at the ACT Legislative Assembly on 15th October. Dr Khalid Tinasti spoke to an invited audience about the beginnings of the Global Commission on Drug Policy mainly because of the horrific drug problems in Latin America during the cold war. In January 2011, a group of personalities from the Americas and Europe established the Global Commission on Drug Policy of which Dr Khalid Tinasti is the Executive Secretary. Membership grew to encompass [Commissioners](#) from around the world. Twelve former heads of State or Government, a former Secretary General of the United Nations, as well as other experienced and well-known leaders from the political, economic and cultural arenas felt,

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FAMILIES AND FRIENDS FOR DRUG LAW REFORM

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@FFDLR**

**We're on the
web: ffdlr.org.au**

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.

Pill testing

(Continued from page 2)

[Commonwealth Park in November.](#)

Ann and Michael Gardner and Bill Bush attended a community rally in support of the continuation of pill testing in Canberra. We constituted a significant proportion of the small crowd. It was the first such rally. Its organisers hope to build on it at future ones. It was held in Garema Place on Saturday 6 October. We were a little disappointed that Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform was not acknowledged as one of the long-standing supporters of pill testing. New parties like Reason and Science as well as the Greens were present. Fiona Patten who has been doing great work in the Victorian Parliament on behalf of the Reason Party that she leads, was present at the Uniting campaign launch in the Sydney Town Hall.



Cannabis Legalisation in the ACT

On 19 September Michael Pettersson, an ALP member of the ACT legislative assembly <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2018/pdfs/P180919.pdf> tabled a draft of a private member Bill, Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Bill 2018, to "[legalise] cannabis for personal use. The bill will allow individual possession of up to 50 grams of cannabis and will also allow for the cultivation of up to four cannabis plants." It is time, he told the Assembly, "for a sensible approach to drug policy in this country and right here in the ACT". The move is very heartening. We are encouraged by the reaction of the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, who said that he has an open mind on the question. The draft bill is open for comments until 15 November. We intend to support this important initiative which holds out the prospect of regulation of this widely used drug in terms that will far more effectively keep it out of the hands of schoolchildren than is the case at the moment where its distribution is in the hands of criminals.

ATODA's Drug Policy Series

(Continued from page 5)

and still feel, that they must advocate for drug policies based on scientific evidence, human rights, public health and safety, for all segments of the population. Dr Tinasti explained to the audience how difficult it is to make any change at the United Nations level. We must work hard at the local level.

Get behind Uniting's Fair Treatment Campaign

by Tweet and Like on Facebook

**#FairTreatmentAU
@FairTreatmentAU**

More info here

**[https://
www.insights.uca.org.au/
news/fair-treatment-
campaign-launched-at-
town-hall](https://www.insights.uca.org.au/news/fair-treatment-campaign-launched-at-town-hall)**