

End of the Long Walk for treatment

It is indeed an honour to be here today amongst such wonderful people. People who care about each other, who care about those who struggle, who care about justice for all. One hundred of you have walked the 400 kilometres for Fair Treatment for those who use drugs.

As the Uniting Church ACT/ NSW Synod says:

It's time to lay down our arms and pick up the pieces. It's time for the reform on drugs. A new path built by people affected by drug policy, free from stigma and shame. New methods that create a courageous movement, based in facts and steeped in care.

The reform on opinions, away from fear and towards understanding. The reform on laws, with hands that reach out with help and not handcuffs. The reform on lives, so that everyone can be treated with dignity and respect. The reform on drugs, for the fair treatment of all people.

Those affected have told their stories along the way so that a growing number may understand the injustice, the craziness, the harm that our drug laws cause. I have told my story for 26 years and now thanks to the brilliance of Dominic Streeter through his magical skills with video I think the story has finally been heard as many of your stories will have gained attention through the power of short video. And all this because the Uniting church Synod took a stand on drug policy.

Thank you to the Uniting team and its many partners for giving this important issue the prominence it needs and deserves. And a special thank you to Kyle Cox who has an extraordinary ability to engage with people and to Bronwyn Seneque and the fabulous Marianne Jauncey. We owe them all so much.

One of the partners, Australia21 is launching a very import report today – It is titled - *We all pay the price: Our drug laws are tearing apart Australia's social fabric, as well as harming drug users and their families.* It exposes a wide range of health and social harms created or worsened by Australia's current drug laws.

It is important and vital that we all continue to work together. This is not the end, this is the beginning of real change.

With all the blood, sweat and tears that you have put into this campaign and the very positive affects it has had, politicians must listen, they have no other option, the people have spoken. This is my plea to all the law making people in this country: you can stop the suffering, take away the criminal sanctions on personal use, treat people as you would like to be treated and stop the suffering. And if this isn't enough it will save you lots of money.

Marion McConnell

Founder, Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

2/11/2018

St Stephen's Macquarie Street, Sydney – 2nd Nov, 2018