



## WHY PORTUGAL'S DRUG POLICY HASN'T WORKED

See Drug Free Australia's detailed document on how Portugal's decriminalisation of all illegal drugs increased its drug use by 59% and opiate deaths by 59% as well.

In this document you will find that:

- Portugal's drug policy needs to be compared to what has successfully worked in Australia - our Tough on Drugs policy from 1998 to 2007.
- Australia's Tough on Drugs reduced the use of all illicit drugs by 39% between 1998 and 2007. It reduced opiate overdose deaths by 67%. ([go to page 5](#))
- Portugal decriminalised all drugs in July 2001. By 2007, use of any illicit drug had risen by 9%. This was followed by decreases in drug use by 2012, in line with decreases in other European countries. By 2017 though, drug use was 59% HIGHER than in 2001. This represents a failure in Portugal's drug policy. ([go to pages 7 through 10](#))
- Use of any drug by high-school students aged 16 and over was 36% HIGHER in 2011 than it was in 2001, despite initial decreases up to 2006. ([go to page 10](#)) According to a separate ESPAD survey, use of cannabis by 16 year old high-school students was 59% HIGHER in 2015 than before decriminalisation. ([go to page 11](#))
- Claims that decriminalisation in Portugal was responsible for reduced opiate use fail to recognise that opiate use was already falling BEFORE July 2001, from 0.9% in 1998 to 0.7% in 2000. A successful opiate reduction strategy was already in place before decriminalisation. ([go to page 14](#))
- Claims that Portugal's drug use fell below European averages likewise fails to note that Portugal has always, other than for heroin use, been below European averages. In 2001, Portugal's drug use per capita was one-fifth that of Australia's. ([go to page 15](#))
- Those overdose deaths in Portugal which are directly comparable to Australian overdoses have INCREASED 59% since 2001. ([go to page 16](#))
- Reductions in HIV in Portugal are constantly attributed to the 'success' of decriminalisation. However, HIV notifications reduced from their 1999 high by 23% BEFORE decriminalisation even commenced, demonstrating that successful reduction policies were already in place before July 2001. ([go to page 19](#))
- Portugal, with no complaint from those who promote its drug policies, coerces rehabilitation. Australia would well do the same. ([go to page 19](#))
- Iceland has shown that its resilience-based education for school children can significantly lower drug use, as did our own Tough on Drugs. ([go to page 23](#))
- Portugal's decriminalisation has produced increased drug use and increased deaths. Tough on Drugs markedly reduced both. Extensive surveys of Australians show that they do not approve the use of illicit drugs, indicating that Australians want less drug use, not more. Portugal's drug policy has produced more drug use, not less. ([go to page 22](#))