



*Promoting Illicit Drug Prevention Initiatives Nationally*

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**Submission for the Inquiry into Drug Law Reform  
to  
Victoria's Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee  
16 March 2017**

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Thank you for inviting Drug Free Australia to provide a submission to this important Inquiry. We offer the following for the Committee's consideration and would be pleased to have an opportunity to be interviewed further to provide further information.

**TOR 1 - The effectiveness of laws, procedures and regulations relating to illicit and synthetic drugs in minimizing drug-related health, social and economic harm**

Drug Free Australia recommends that:

- a. **the laws in most jurisdictions need to be focused on primary prevention** to prevent or intervene very early in the drug-taking practices of young people. This includes a comprehensive education strategy that not only explains the harms of these drugs, but also provides solutions for individuals and communities. The dismantling of the National School Drug Education Strategy(NSDES) in 2004/5 has failed our children. The 'Tough on Drugs' strategy which integrated with the NSDES showed a reduction in drug such as heroin and cannabis by 2006/7. However, this too was dropped and since then drug use has exponentially increased.

While these were federal initiatives, there is nothing to prevent Victoria leading the way in re-introducing mandatory school drug education in all schools, combined with a sustained community education/awareness campaign similar to those done at Federal level in the early-mid 2000's. Prevention is better than cure – and also less costly in both \$\$ and lives.

- b. **the push to decriminalize more drugs is a trajectory that is highly dangerous and can only increase use.** We already have in place, a drug diversion program which enables young drug taking offenders to by-pass the criminal justice system and attempts to change their patterns of behaviour through counselling and rehabilitation. This surely is not only fair, but sufficient. However expanding the concept to take the law enforcement intervention completely out of drug use would open a 'Pandora's box' and create far greater harm to our emerging generations.

**Please find, attached, DFA's summarised research on the impact that decriminalisation would have.**

**TOR 2 – The practice of other Australian states and territories and overseas jurisdictions and their approach to drug law reform and how other positive reforms could be adopted into Victorian law.**

**Point 1 - Drug Free Australia offers two quite extensive studies (reports) that have been compiled in the last few years for the Committee’s consideration.**

- a. **The UK Drug Strategy Review 2014/15 produced an ‘International Comparators’ Report:** The International Comparators Study was published in October 2014 and sets out the evidence on different approaches used by countries to address the misuse of drugs. The report can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-international-comparators](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-international-comparators)
  
- b. **Drug Policy Futures is a coalition of various jurisdictions and non government organisations world-wide that work on the following drug policy principles as guidelines to drug policy:**
  - Drug policies should prevent initiation of drug use.
  - Drug policies must respect human rights (for users and non-users alike) as well as the principle of proportionality.
  - Drug policies should strike a balance of efforts to reduce the use of drugs and the supply of drugs.
  - Drug policies should protect children from drug use.
  - Drug policies should ensure access to medical help, treatment and recovery services.
  - Drug policies should ensure access to controlled drugs for legitimate scientific and medical purposes.
  - Drug policies should ensure that medical and judicial responses are coordinated with the goal of reducing drug use and drug-related consequences.

**Link to Drug Policy Future’s 2015 Report : ‘Future of Drug Policy – Grounded in Global Evidence’**  
[http://drugpolicyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Drug\\_Policy\\_Futures\\_Report\\_2015\\_edits.pdf](http://drugpolicyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Drug_Policy_Futures_Report_2015_edits.pdf)

**Point 2 - DFA also wishes to draw the Committee’s attention to the question of Portugal being held up as a ‘success story’ for decriminalisation, compared with that of Sweden which has a balanced drug policy.**

<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
Population – 10.3 million	Population – 9.8 million

In its 2014 report European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) commented :

- "In mainland Portugal there were between 27,434 and 36,282 high-risk opioid users..... . Due to changes in the methodology and stratification of the estimate by substances in 2014, no comparisons with the earlier estimates can be made because of insufficient data. "
- The Swedish Department of Health (2012) states the total number of serious problem (high risk ) users of all illicit drugs was approx. 29,000.

**Point 3 - An Australian Experience (that is all too common):**

Of great concern is that there are some drug law reformists who have an agenda to either legalise or in some way make them more available to people without penalty. This, according to research, is not the way to curb use and therefore, prevent and reduce the harm they cause.

The same people often argue that it is their 'human right' to take drugs. However, what they fail to explain (or perhaps understand) is that, these drugs are mind-altering and are prone to creating addiction. These drugs are illegal because they are dangerous.

During the journey towards addiction and afterward, drugs usually adversely affect not only the person using, but also their families, their children, relationships and the wider community.

Below is a link to a recent podcast which is an interview of a father, Tony Wood, who lost his 15 year old daughter to ecstasy. One pill can kill, and this is the nature of the constituents of Ecstasy; it's not simply a 'bad batch'.

This interview describes the high level health risks that our young people face, and sadly the families they leave behind, if we don't take a stronger, practical legal stand against drug use.

<http://www.2gb.com/podcast/were-losing-the-war-on-drugs/>

We would be pleased to provide further information on any of the above points raised in this submission.

*Jo Baxter*

**Josephine Baxter**  
**Executive Director**  
**Drug Free Australia**  
**M: 0403334002**