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SECRETARY  
Drug Free Australia

It's very important that all Australian Politicians are given a clear picture regarding the important Article in the Australian, page 2 Friday October 5 2017, called [Portugal open MPs' eyes to decriminalizing drugs].

As you will see below (1<sup>st</sup> graph) there was a RISE in overall drug use between 2001, when decriminalization commenced, and 2007. This rise follows other countries which have decriminalized cannabis, where rises of 10-15% are typical. For Portugal it was an 8% rise. Again this was expected. Then by 2012 there were decreases, but this was true for many countries in Europe, and there are various newspaper reports from Europe than can be found on the web talking about these general decreases in Europe during those years. So after an initial rise in drug use, Portugal from there tracked similar to other countries. This also happened in South Australia and the NT, which decriminalized cannabis. They had quite meteoric rises in use, well above the increases we saw in the USA when cannabis was decriminalized, but it quickly settled back to the levels of NSW and Vic, which had well-entrenched cannabis problems already, and then SA and NT tracked similarly to NSW and Vic from that time on.

Now when you go to the graph titled Graph 4 you can look at the increases in drug use between 2001 and 2007 for young people aged 15-34. Notice that some drugs doubled, another quadrupled. This was after decriminalization and is nothing to boast about. And yes drug use decreased by 2012 in line with other Euro countries.

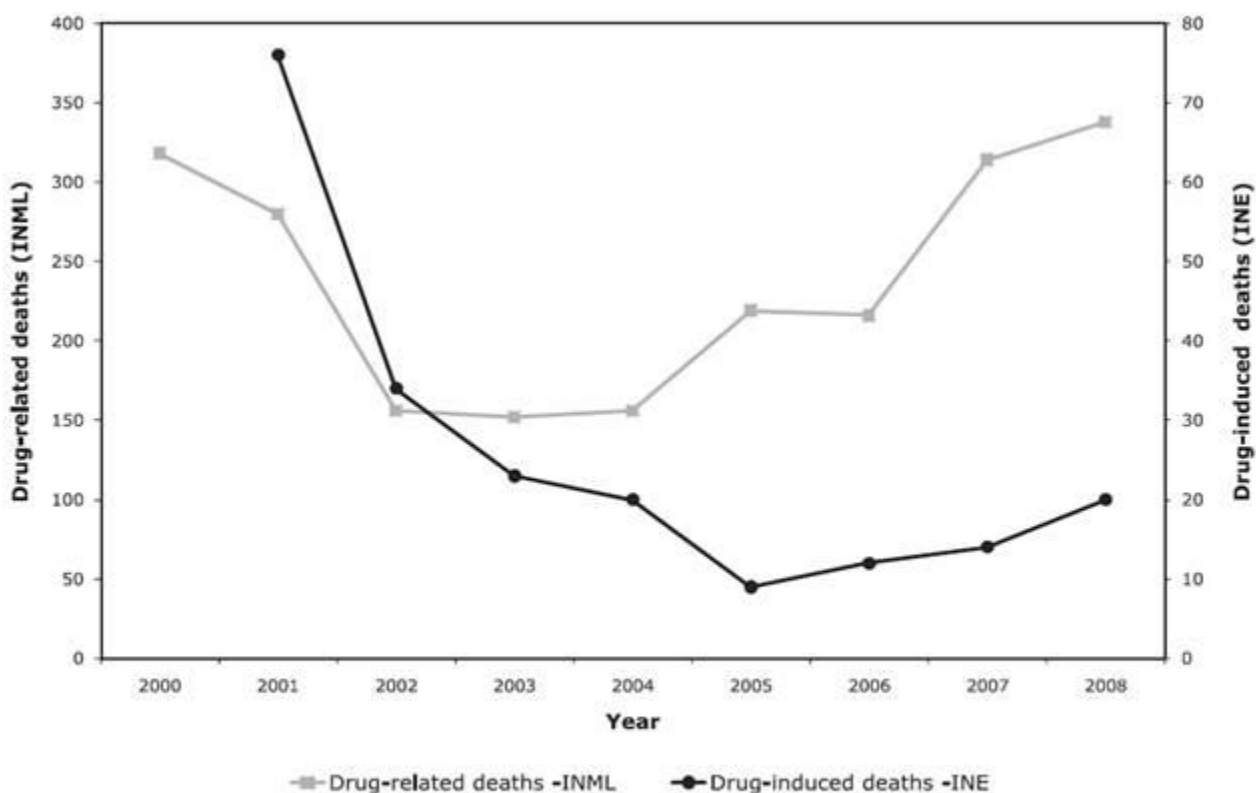
Go next to my note about heroin use falling before 2001. This was happening before decriminalization, but those spruiking Portugal seem to ignore this fact. Something was driving down use in Portugal before they decriminalized. And yet it is decriminalization which is continually given the credit. Something else was already in play, but I have no clue what it was.

Then go to the bottom graph which shows that high school drug use went up markedly between 2006 and 2011. You can see it on the graph. As against the graph for 2001, which I have not included, drug use for 15-17 year olds went up 36% between 2001 and 2011.

Finally, I did not send the following to Craig, but there are real problems with how Portugal measures drug related deaths. In the graph below, the grey line, which starts with about 320 deaths is indicating people with toxicology analysis who measured positive to any illicit drug even if it did not cause their death. This was the only measure originally available to Portugal back in 2001, and obviously is useless. By 2010 they decided that they had best only show the deaths where doctors had determined that an illicit drug caused the death. This is the black line and in 2010 they back-calculated the deaths as far as 2001. So at decriminalization it was less than 80 deaths in actual fact according to this data. I will need to look into whether Craig Kelly's death data is mixing the old inaccurate method with the new more accurate data, which would then show decreases from hundreds of deaths to tens of deaths, and of course be totally spurious. I suspect this is what has happened with the death data because there are not such huge decreases as to comparatively decrease Australian deaths by 1700 as was claimed.

## Portugal's Decriminalisation

Since the implementation of decriminalisation in 2001 overall drug use in Portugal rose by 2007 - compare the grey bars in its official REITOX 2014 annual report to the European Monitoring Centre (EMCDDA) graphed below. While cannabis use increased marginally for all aged groups, cocaine use doubled as did use of speed and ice.



**Figure 4.** Drug-related deaths in Portugal between 2000 and 2008 using National Institute of Forensic Medicine (INML) definition (positive post-mortem toxicological test for drugs) and National Statistics Institute (INE) definition (determination by physician according to International Classification of Diseases criteria that death was attributable to drugs). Source: Instituto da Droga e da Toxicodpendência (2009, 2010) [12,42].

## OTHER INDICATORS

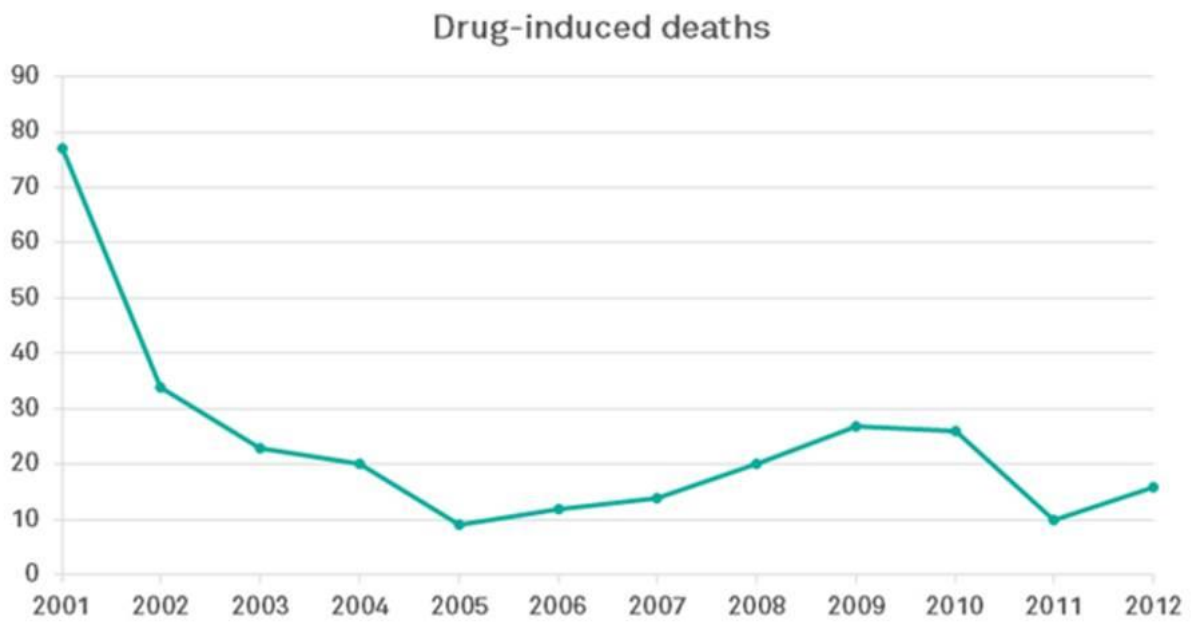
Country	Drug-induced deaths (aged 15–64)	HIV diagnoses attributed to injecting drug use (ECDC)	Year of estimate	Injecting drug use estimate	Syringes distributed through specialised programmes
	cases per million population (count)	cases per million population (count)		cases per 1 000 population	count
Belgium	9 (67)	1.3 (15)	2015	2.3–4.6	1 034 242
Bulgaria	4 (17)	3.6 (26)	–	–	364 111
Czech Republic	6 (39)	0.4 (4)	2015	6.1–6.4	6 421 095
Denmark	58 (210)	1.4 (8)	–	–	–
Germany	22 (1 185)	1.7 (134)	–	–	–
Estonia	103 (88)	41.9 (55)	2009	4.3–10.8	2 136 691
Ireland (1)	71 (213)	10.8 (50)	–	–	393 275
Greece	0 (0)	6.4 (70)	2015	0.6–1.0	268 157
Spain (1)	15 (455)	2.1 (96)	2014	0.2–0.3	1 483 399
France (1)	7 (294)	0.9 (58)	2014	2.1–3.2	12 314 781
Croatia	19 (54)	0.5 (2)	2012	0.4–0.6	923 650
Italy	8 (304)	1.8 (112)	–	–	–
Cyprus	15 (9)	1.2 (1)	2015	0.3–0.7	164
Latvia	14 (18)	44.3 (88)	2012	7.3–11.7	524 949
Lithuania	59 (115)	15.1 (44)	–	–	200 630
Luxembourg	31 (12)	24.9 (14)	2009	4.5–6.9	361 392
Hungary	4 (25)	0.2 (2)	2015	1	188 696
Malta	28 (8)	0 (0)	–	–	340 644
Netherlands	16 (182)	0.1 (1)	2008	0.2–0.2	–
Austria	26 (152)	2.6 (22)	–	–	5 953 919
Poland	9 (249)	1 (37)	–	–	10 142
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>6 (39)</b>	<b>4.2 (44)</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>1.9–2.5</b>	<b>1 004 706</b>
Romania	2 (21)	7.1 (142)	–	–	1 425 592
Slovenia	22 (30)	0.5 (1)	–	–	500 757
Slovakia	7 (27)	0.6 (3)	–	–	347 162
Finland	43 (150)	1.3 (7)	2012	4.1–6.7	5 301 000
Sweden	100 (618)	1.5 (15)	2008–11	1.3	281 397
United Kingdom (2)	60 (2 528)	2.8 (182)	2004–11	2.9–3.2	–
Turkey	10 (533)	0.2 (13)	–	–	–
Norway	76 (257)	1.5 (8)	2014	2.2–3.0	2 500 192
European Union	21.3 (7 109)	2.4 (1 233)	–	–	–
EU, Turkey and Norway	20.3 (7 899)	2.1 (1 254)	–	–	–

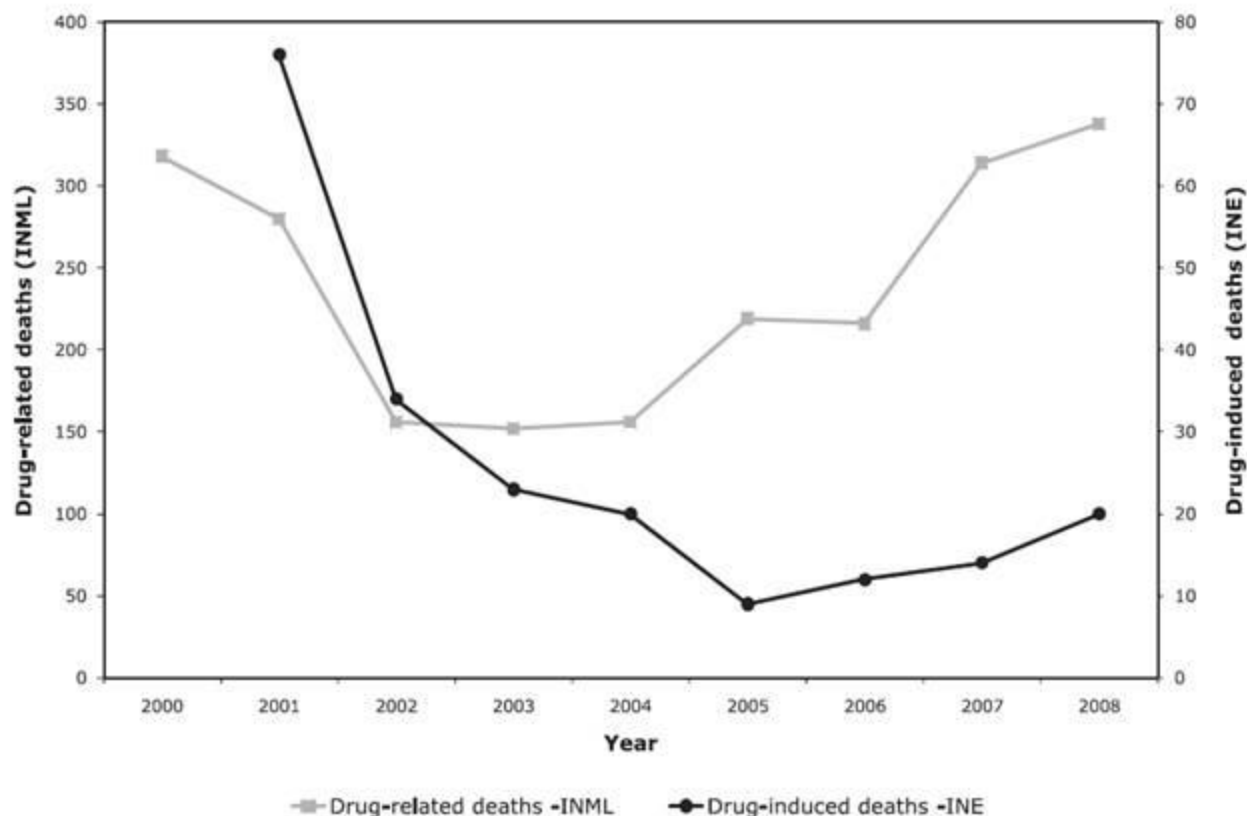
[http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4541/TDAT17001ENN.pdf\\_en](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4541/TDAT17001ENN.pdf_en)

Looking at the drug deaths in Portugal, the reality is this:

Now this Table below from the official EMCDDA report is more in line with where I would expect Portugal's deaths to be with 20% injecting users and 80% smoking heroin. The death numbers are too suspiciously low in the Transform graph.

I think Craig Kelly needs to know that there are conflicting data on deaths, and the data in the European Monitoring Centre report is the most official of all.





**Figure 4.** Drug-related deaths in Portugal between 2000 and 2008 using National Institute of Forensic Medicine (INML) definition (positive post-mortem toxicological test for drugs) and National Statistics Institute (INE) definition (determination by physician according to International Classification of Diseases criteria that death was attributable to drugs). Source: Instituto da Droga e da Toxicodpendência (2009, 2010) [12,42].

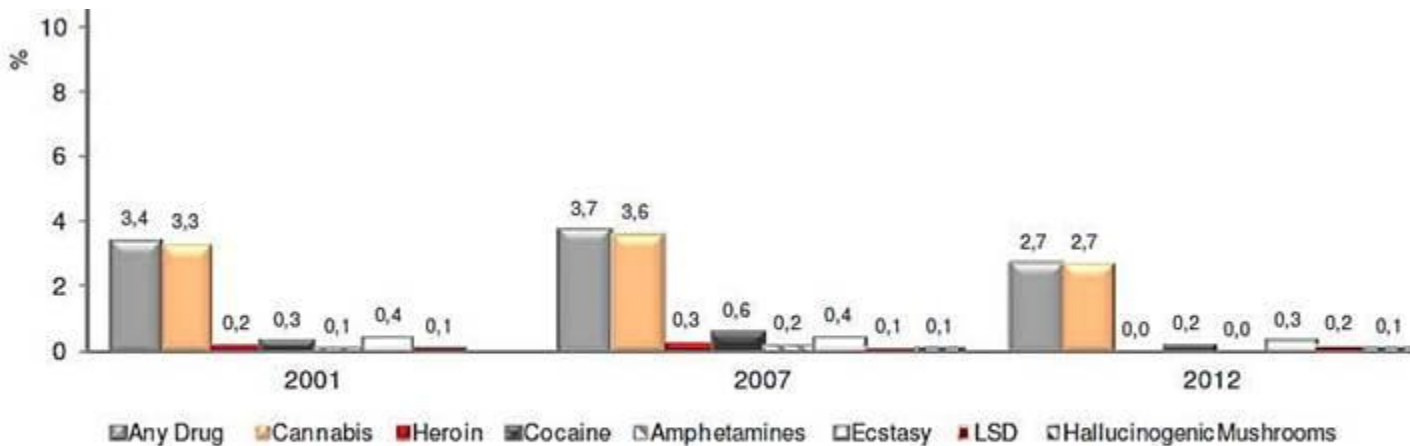
1. The reason they are having much lower death rates than Australia is found in their Report to the European Monitoring Centre (which then sends all figures to the United Nations for their World Drug Report). The European Monitoring Centre 2016 Drug Report (attached) shows that 18% of their heroin users inject as seen on page 71 copied below (7<sup>th</sup> column), which means that most of their users are smoking their heroin. In Australia almost everyone here injects which is why we have high rates of overdose – smoking is much safer.
2. The drug deaths for Australia Craig Kelly has cited are likely to be the cumulative drug deaths of all types, of which overdoses or acute deaths, are a subset. We include deaths from cocaine, ice, speed, ecstasy, methadone and cannabis. The figures above are acute deaths or overdoses, and would all be from heroin or opiates such as diverted oxycodone. Craig does not give us the number of opiate deaths for Australia as released for 2016. But they are likely to be less than 1,000. In 2012, the last figures I had been able to find, we had around 32 deaths per million from OD.
3. If Australia wants to replicate the low death rates from opiates, health authorities are going to have to convince Australians to switch from injecting to smoking or snorting. Unfortunately

Australians will never do this because it is a less efficient way of getting your hit. Once an injector, always an injector.

- Remember that Portugal, even before decriminalization in 2001 still only had 7.5 deaths per million and they have now got them down to 1.5 per million by 2012. Drug deaths are down to 20% of the 2000 figure. In Australia we reduced deaths between 1999 and 2001 to just 27% of what they were in 1999. So Portugal is doing well. Remember that they coerce treatment over there in the way Sweden does. Perhaps it is time for Australia to start coercion.

### Portugal's Decriminalisation

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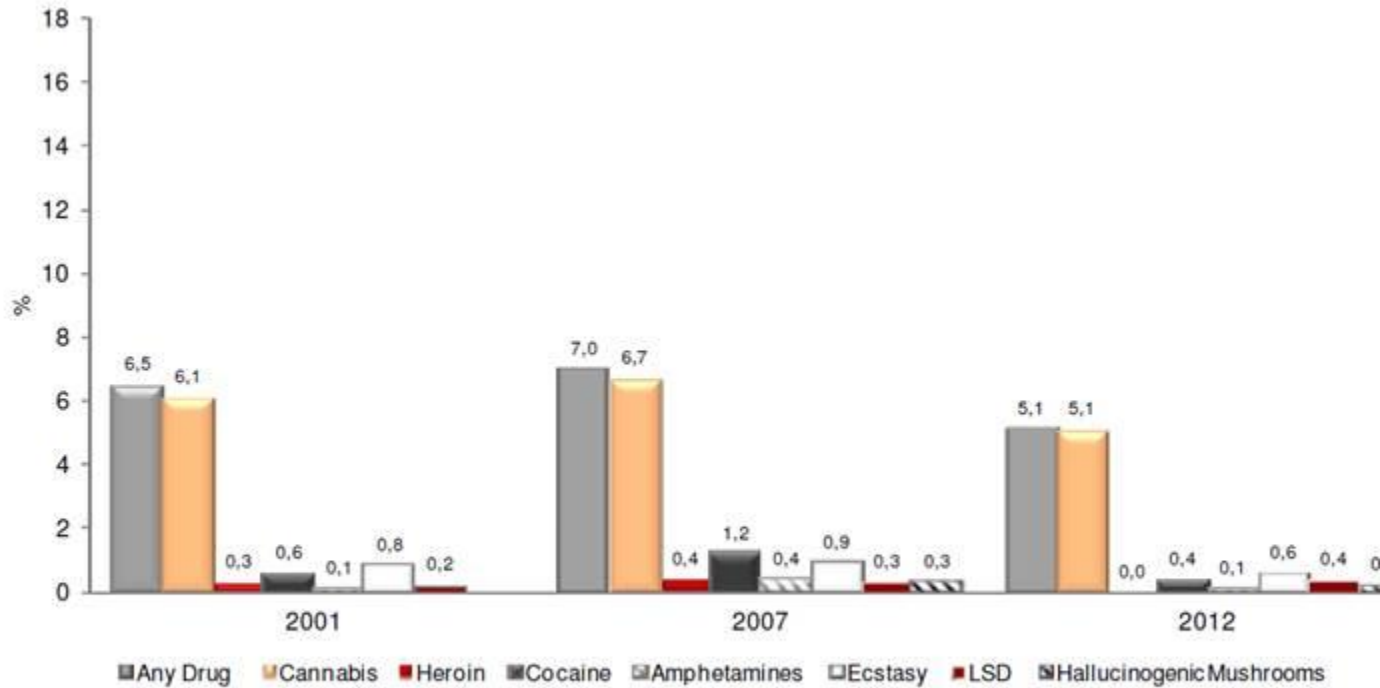


**Graph 3 – General Population, Portugal – Total (15-64), last 12 months prevalence, by drug (%) (SICAD2013)**

Between 2007 and 2012 drug use in Portugal for all age groups declined in line with general decreases across various European countries.

Italy - Opiates	0.8% (2005)	0.48% (2011)
Spain - Opiates	0.6% (2000)	0.29% (2012)
Switzerland - Opiates	0.61% (2000)	0.1% (2011)
Italy - Cocaine	1.1% (2001)	0.6% (2012)
Italy - Speed/Ice	0.4% (2005)	0.09% (2012)
Austria - Speed/Ice	0.8% (2004)	0.5% (2012)

Drug use by young people aged 15-34, as graphed by the REITOX report (below), saw use of speed and ice quadrupling, cocaine use doubling, and use of all other drugs increasing.



**Graph 4 – General Population, Portugal – Young Adult Population (15-34 years), last 12 m prevalence, by type of drug (%) (SICAD2013)**

### Opiate Use was Already Falling Before Decriminalisation

Much has been made of the decreases in heroin use in Portugal after decriminalisation. But Opiate use which had topped OECD countries in 1998 at a staggering 0.9% according to the United Nation's World Drug Report for 2000, halved to 0.46% by 2005.

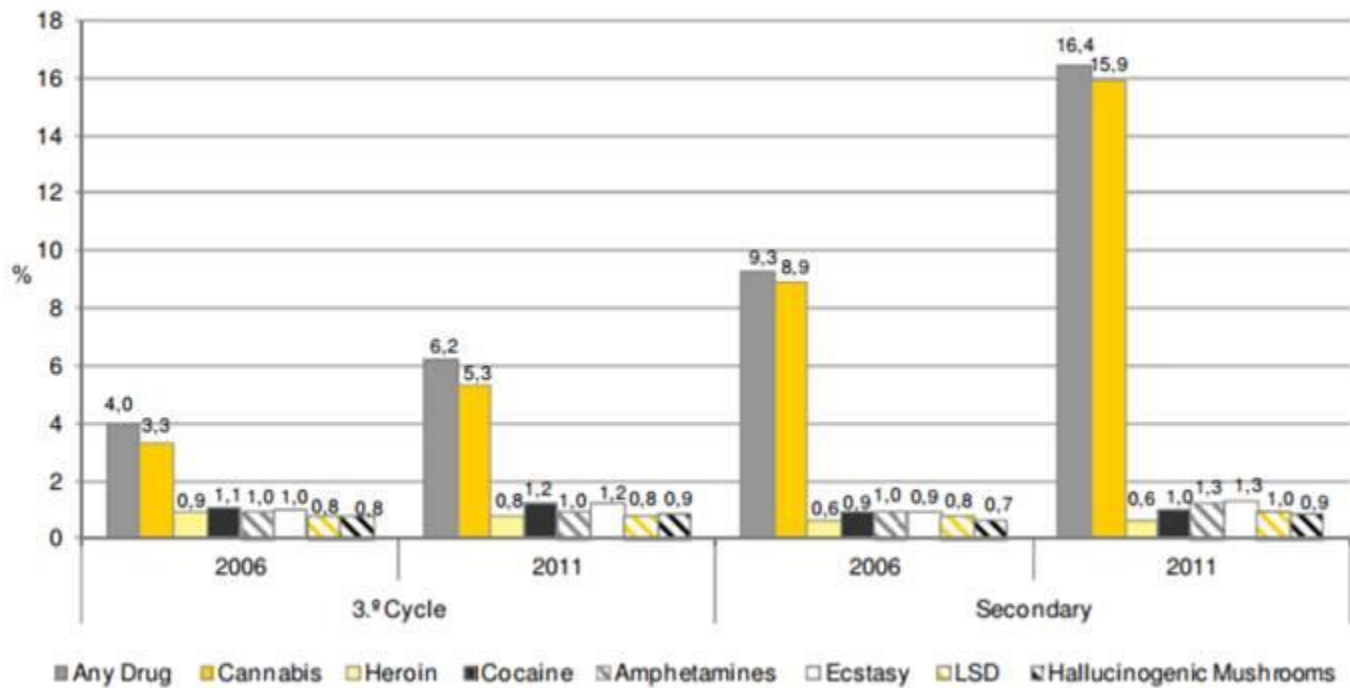
However half of that decreased use **predated** decriminalisation, with 0.7% recorded in the UN World Drug Report for the year 2000. It is not clear what dynamic was in play for the 22% decrease in heroin use by 2000, the year before decriminalisation.

It appears that heroin use is simply not recorded for 2012 in the graphs above. Other data in the same 2014 REITOX report (p 71) show that presentations for heroin use scored higher for

outpatients and for detox units than any other type of illicit drug. Heroin also made up 42% of residential rehab admissions.

### High-School Student Drug Use Markedly Higher by 2011

Use of any illicit drug by high-school students rose markedly between 2007 and 2011. The graph is again from the 2014 REITOX report to the EMCDDA.



**Graph 15 – School Population – INME (3º Cycle and Secondary): Last 30 Days Prevalence of use, by type of drug (IDT, I.P. 2012)**

### Compare Australia’s Tough on Drugs Over the Same Period

Compare the results of Australia’s Tough on Drugs between 1998 and 2007. This approach was with use of most illicit still a criminal offence.



### Use of any Illicit Drug in Previous 12 Months - Australia

