



# Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc.

*committed to preventing tragedy that arises from illicit drug use*

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**NEWSLETTER**

**October, 2002**

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## Next Meeting

**Thursday, October 24**

at St Ninians Uniting Church,  
Cnr Brigalow and Mouat Streets,  
Lyneham

**Speaker: Michelle Tziarkas from  
"Directions ACT"**

*(formerly Drug Referral and Information Centre)*

With the change of name Directions has taken on new programs. There will be time to ask questions.

**Meeting 7:30pm**

**Speaker 8:00pm**

### Editorial

I write this editorial at a time when the details of the tragic and horrific tales of the Bali bombing are emerging. Our heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones.

For those of us reading this newsletter who have also lost loved ones we can understand the grief that they are experiencing. To hear the news and feel the bottom fall out of your world, to wonder why the rest of the world still goes on – the traffic continues and people still go to work - when your world has stopped. And later, to see a person in a crowd thinking it is your loved one but discovering it to be a stranger.

At first will come the grief, then the question "why", and perhaps anger and perhaps taking some action such as pressuring the government into preventing it happening to other families.

Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform's Bill Bush and I have been pressuring the government in the last few weeks, not so much to take new approaches but to stop them taking a step backwards with the abolition of the National Crime Authority, a body whose primary role is to investigate organised crime.

The Federal Government has introduced a bill to replace the NCA with an organisation to be called the Australian Crime Commission. Instead of being independently headed by a judge or a highly qualified lawyer the ACC will be headed by law enforcement agencies dominated by state and territory police commissioners.

The independence of the NCA allowed it to speak out.. The NCA went to the heart of the matter saying that we were not winning against organised crime and it was essential to

## Canberra

### Remembrance Ceremony

***Make a note in your diary today!***

The 2002 Remembrance Ceremony for those who lose their lives to illicit drugs will be held at the memorial rock, Weston Park, Yarralumla on Monday 4th November at 12:30pm. This year we will be particularly thinking of those with a mental illness who also used illicit drugs.

Speakers will be:

**Anne Deveson**, parent, writer and broadcaster with a long involvement in social justice issues. She was the writer of the best selling book about the impact of schizophrenia on family life – *Tell Me I'm Here*.

**Brendan Smyth**, Shadow Minister for Health and Community Affairs; and

**Rev'd Gray Birch**, Parish Minister, Chaplain to the ACT Ambulance Services and former National Director of the Uniting Church Frontier Services.

**An invitation is included in this newsletter. Please let others know about the ceremony.**



### Help needed

Please let Marion know 6254 2961 if you can bring sandwiches, cakes or slice for refreshments following the ceremony. Flowers to be placed at the memorial rock are also needed. Again let Marion know.

take a whole of government approach to remove the profit from the illicit drug trade which was the main source of income for organised crime. Effectively the messenger is to be shot for bringing an unwelcome message.

The new ACC will not be as independent but will be sensitive to political and police influence.

And where secrecy is important in many investigations, the highly fractured committee managed organisation structure of the ACC runs greater risk of leakages which will make it less effective.

The link between FFDLR and the NCA is that while families suffer from the effects of illicit drugs, organised crime grows rich from the profits. If a less effective organisation replaces the NCA it will be a gift to organised crime. Meanwhile families will continue to suffer.

We have visited a number of members of parliament and on 14 October we presented evidence to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the NCA. That committee has been charged with examination of the ACC bill and reporting back to the house of representatives on its findings.

We urged them not to lose sight of the fact that trade in illicit drugs fuels organised crime and terrorist organisations and that if a less effective organisation (such as the ACC) is introduced it will be a gift to those organisations and that families and community will suffer even more. We urged them not to rush with unholy haste but to consider carefully and fully the implications. Hard assessment of the evidence was required.

Those lost in Bali were significant because so many were lost in just one night while those lost to drugs occurs over a longer time period and does not have the same impact. Nevertheless it is no less painful for the families and friends of those lost to drugs. That they may have used an illicit drug that contributed to their death does not mean that they were loved any less.

Remembrance ceremonies are being held all over the country to remember them and to show that their lives were valued. Please attend a ceremony to show your support. (Details of ceremonies are included in this newsletter.)

It is also important that our community leaders recognise that the grief is no less real and no less painful. **Please ring your local member of parliament and ask them to attend.** It will ensure that in the cut and thrust of politics they do not lose touch with that fundamental building block of our communities – families.

### **Other remembrance ceremonies**

<b>Date &amp; Location</b>	<b>Details</b>
2 Nov Brisbane	Tree dedication and remembrance ceremony Venue/time: Emma Miller Park, off Roma St Brisbane, 11am Contact: 07 3252 1735
2 Nov Darwin	Speakers: Bishop Ted Collins, Mrs Jane Aargard (Minister for Health), Rev Brian Morgan & Dr P Bauert, AMANT. Opening address will be by Sen Trish Crossin. Venue/time: The Pavillion Darwin High School, 6 – 9 pm
3 Nov Adelaide	Speaker: Rev Brian Phillips Venue/Time: Maughan Church, cnr Franklin & Pitt Sts, 2pm Contact: Kath 08 8384 4314
3 Nov Sydney	Ashfield Uniting Church, 180 Liverpool Rd Ashfield, 7pm Contact: 02 9715 2632
4 Nov Canberra	<b>See notice on page 1</b>

### **The Office of Drug Policy, German Federal Ministry of Health**

Study shows drug consumption rooms lower the number of drug-related deaths.

An evaluation of the impact of drug consumption rooms in Germany was undertaken by the Centre for Applied Psychology, Environmental and Social Research (ZEUS) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Health.

Spokeswoman for the Federal Ministry of Health, Marion Caspers-Merk, says "the results of the study show clearly that drug consumption rooms contribute substantially to reducing drug-related deaths. Only those who are alive, can move on from their addiction, therefore the Federal Government wants to ensure survival assistance for heroin-dependent individuals are supported and legally. The scientific study confirms impressively that these services reduce the risk of death and that further assistance for severely dependent people is being taken up."

The key findings of the study were: The target group, long time heroin-dependent individuals, are being reached in drug consumption rooms for referral to other services; over half of surveyed users indicated that they had received referrals for further assistance including detoxification (23 %), social services (20 %) and therapy (19 %).

In all German drug consumption rooms, the survival of heroin dependent clients (in the case of overdose) is ensured by immediate emergency care; Between 1995-2001, there was a total of 2.1 million visits to Drug Consumption Rooms, in the same period 5426 drug related emergencies were documented, which without staff intervention could have been fatal.

In a time series analysis over a ten year period, drug-related deaths in Hamburg, Hanover, Frankfurt/Main and Saarbrücken were examined. The operation of drug consumption rooms in these cities resulted in a statistically significant reduction in the number of drug-related deaths in these cities.

Drug consumption rooms, were independently associated with a specific, non-coincidental contribution to the reduction of the number of drug-related deaths.

Other findings from the study were that there were no substantial differences in the statutory requirements of the individual States in meeting the minimum standard of the Federal legislation. Opportunistic and first time users were not permitted entry.

The minimum standard of the statutory requirements are being met; immediate medical emergency care is ensured; full-time staff have the necessary experience for low threshold drug work; discussion at first visit regarding the rules and procedures of the service usually occurs, and extensive referral networks for further assistance are in place.

Over three quarters of clients were satisfied with the opening times; the majority were also being engaged by staff to discuss broader issues; interactions with staff were rated as predominantly positively; and the provision of basic services (medical care, and syringe exchange among other things.) were very positively regarded.

The Federal spokeswoman, Mrs. Caspers-Merk says: "The expectations of the Federal Government in relation to the work undertaken by drug consumption rooms have been fulfilled. Drug consumption rooms facilitate contact with this difficult to reach group. The low threshold nature of drug consumption rooms provides a means for the stabilization of the health of dependent individuals, providing survival assistance and in some cases, a way out of drug

addiction. In addition they contribute to a reduction in the public drug scene.

Background information: The most frequent causes of death are still overdose due to heroin and poly drug use. Therefore it is an urgent goal of the Federal Government to ensure the survival and stabilization of the health of the drug-dependent individuals and provide assistance for health and social rehabilitation. The legislative assembly created the conditions with agreement of the Upper House of Parliament in April 2000 that the States of the Federal Republic, which consider such services necessary can issue appropriate statutory orders, in order to furnish drug consumption rooms. The regulatory framework contains minimum standards for safety and quality service provision.

Including adequate response in case of emergencies, referral to other drug assistance services, qualified personnel, co-operation with the order authorities or the prevention of criminal offences in the areas and in the direct environment. Statutory orders currently exist in Hamburg, Hessen, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and the Saarland. A statutory order in preparation in Berlin.

In Baden-Wuerttemberg and in Bavaria there are cities which wish to operate drug consumption rooms, but the States refuse appropriate statutory orders.

There were clear signs that the operation of drug consumption areas lead to a lowering of drug deaths. In order to examine these trends scientifically, an evaluation of the impact of the drug consumption areas took place in November 2001 to July 2002.

The goals of the study were to compare the statutory orders issued by the Lands of the Federal Republic with one another and measure their different effects; to collect data on visits, emergencies and referrals for further assistance; to evaluate the enterprise of the drug consumption rooms meeting the minimum standard and to make suggestions on the improvement of practice; to examine by a time series analysis, the contribution of drug consumption rooms in the lowering of the number of drug-related deaths, as well as the criminality and drug use in the surrounding areas.

The study will shortly appear in the *Nomos*, publishing house Baden-Baden.

## **Former British Drug Czar Mo Mowlam Calls for Total Global Legalization, Cites Need to Quit Funding Political Violence**

<http://www.drcnet.org/wol/256.html#mowlam> &  
<http://www.drcnet.org/wol/235.html#momowlam>

Former British cabinet member Mo Mowlam, who was responsible for Prime Minister Tony Blair's drug policy from 1999 through last year and who has already called drug prohibition a "failure", again called for an end to global drug prohibition, this time explicitly linking drug legalization to the success of the "war on terror." In a September 19 op-ed in the *Guardian* (UK), Mowlam wrote that the most effective means of fighting the "war on terror" would be to legalize the drug trade and thereby dry up a significant source of funding for criminal activities and political violence worldwide.

Clearly reflecting a broader European revulsion with the war drums beating along the Potomac, Mowlam's essay included a strong critique of President Bush's "war on terror" as it has been waged so far. "While the United States and Britain continue to assert that toppling Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq is the best next step in the war against terrorism, I would like to suggest a more productive course of action," wrote Mowlam. "May I suggest that rather than bombing innocent civilians in Muslim countries, the United States and Britain begin to take a more intelligent approach to the drug trade: namely, to legalize it."

Mowlam cited high US officials, including President Bush himself, as making the drug-terror connection and agreed that such a connection indeed exists. But she argued that the way to break that connection is not an ever-escalating war on drugs that can never be won. "It is clear that the present approach to drugs is not working, and if the war against drugs fails then we can be sure that the war against terrorism will also be unsuccessful,"

Mowlam wrote. "From my experience of being responsible for drug policy in the previous government, I came to the conclusion that the legalization and regulation of all drugs was the only way to reduce the harmful effects of this activity," Mowlam wrote, adding that she had "many reasons" for reaching that conclusion. "One of those reasons is that we need to detach the international drug business from criminality -- not least because it would further isolate international terrorism by removing the finance and other resources, such as places for training, and money laundering facilities.

"Drugs and terrorism are linked and are set to become more so," Mowlam concluded. "Legalization of drugs would stop this connection: It would begin to solve problems caused by drugs today and would isolate the terrorists."

As the US government heightens the schism between itself and its European allies over Iraq and the anti-terror war, it is also bringing fundamental disagreements over drug policy into sharper focus.

### ***Volunteers sought for Family Drug Support Training***

*Family Drug Support* needs to train dedicated volunteers to help out for just a few hours a fortnight on the support HOTLINE.

Training in listening, support and motivational skills will be held on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 November 2002 from 10am to 4pm at Calvary Hospital.

**For Bookings phone 6205 4515.**

Suggested donation \$25.00



**Newsbrief: UN Drug Control Chief Warns  
Canada Not to Legalize Marijuana**

<http://www.drcnet.org/wol/256.html#untocanada>

<http://www.drcnet.org/wol/253.html#canadiansenate>

Reacting to the Canadian Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs' September 4 report calling for legalization and regulation of marijuana, the head of the United Nations' global anti-drug bureaucracy warned this week that Canada would make a "significant error" if it followed the committee's advice. Antonio Mario Costa, executive director of the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, used a Tuesday interview with the Toronto Globe & Mail to defend marijuana prohibition worldwide.

Although Costa conceded that marijuana has few links with violent crime and lacks the same association with dependency as harder drugs, he called it a health hazard that could only be dealt with by global prohibition, trotting out the familiar canards about marijuana as a

"gateway drug" and the higher potency of contemporary marijuana.

"Some of our countries are on the verge of making an error which is as significant as when tobacco spread," said Costa, referring to the Canadian controversy over marijuana. He said that legalization would violate the UN conventions on narcotic drugs. "Just because something can be legalized, it does not become good per se," he added, demonstrating a flair for the non sequitur.

Costa also warned that the West is sending a bad message to other countries with its increasing tolerance of drug use. "The drug scene cannot be parceled out to individual countries," he said. "The drug scene has to be seen in its totality. I've heard very negative comments from developing countries,

saying 'We are maintaining a very strong policy of prohibition and what's happening? It's considered with leniency by some northern countries.'"

**Drugs in the Family**

Change of meeting venue

Now meeting at The Junction (old QE II building) cnr Marcus Clarke and Rudd Streets, Civic.

Contact: 6257 3043

## Family Drug Support

### Stepping Stones Course

*A PRACTICAL COURSE TO HELP FAMILY*

#### **MEMBERS COPE WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL ISSUES**

**When:** Over two weekends -

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> Nov** 5.30pm - 9.00pm

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> Nov** 9.30am - 5.00pm

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> Nov** 5.30pm - 9.00pm

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> Nov** 9.30am - 5.00pm

& a follow up evening.

**Where:** Calvary Hospital, Function room, Cnr. Hayden Drive & Belconnen Way, BRUCE, ACT

**Application:** phone 6205 4515

Most families have influence over the drug user. This influence may be strengthened when the family understands the process and accepts support itself. The focus is on what the family can do when working in collaboration. The harm minimisation philosophy is used.

**Topics covered include :**

- coping with stress and anger,
- tips about communication,
- boundary/limit setting.

Cost \$25.00 per family (includes booklet GUIDE TO COPING) Run by Alcohol & Drug program