

Promoting Illicit Drug Prevention Initiatives Nationally

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Rotary Partnership in SA

Rotary's Drug Prevention Initiative welcomed by Schools

Schools in the City of Tea Tree Gully have welcomed a generous donation of drug education books by local Rotary Clubs, to celebrate Australia Day 2008. Entitled 'Golden Haze' by author Jade Lewis, the books carry a strong drug prevention message and class sets of 30 were presented to school representatives at an annual Australia Day Breakfast at Pine Park, on 28 January.

The Rotary Clubs of Modbury, Tea Tree Gully and Golden Grove joined forces to purchase a series of the class sets of 'Golden Haze' and, together with Drug Free Australia, have arranged distribution to secondary schools in the area.

Rotarian Keith Rendell, who coordinated the initiative of the 3 clubs said today: "The book 'Golden Haze', is an important story to be told for young people and parents about drug addiction. It shows how, at 16, Jade, a well-adjusted teenager, who was a straight 'A' student and budding Olympic athlete from a loving family, innocently became introduced to drugs. This is an excellent book to put into the hands of any young person. It serves as a warning to some that may be tempted by the drug scene and will give hope to anyone with a serious life-controlling problem".



'Golden Haze'
a book by Jade Lewis and Dave Reardon

Drug Free Australia's Executive Officer, Jo Baxter added: "We are very pleased that 9 out of the 11 secondary schools in the City of Tea Tree Gully have taken up our offer to donate the books as class sets. Teachers plan to use them in health and English classes – they will be an important catalyst for discussion and should impact positively on middle school students and their future choices about drugs".

Ryan Hidden, Director of the Recovered Drug Users' League of SA and Drug Free Australia's Youth Advocate complimented the work of Jade in documenting her addiction and recovery experience so realistically. Ryan acknowledges that, as with others who suffer addiction, Jade's health was the first to be adversely affected, as was her relationship with those closest to her – her family. Jade acknowledges that she is one of the lucky ones – and understands completely that 'prevention is better than cure' especially where illicit drug use is concerned'.

Keith Rendell, Assistant District Governor, is hopeful that this project may be considered for adoption by other Rotary Clubs, now that it has been successfully implemented in Tea Tree Gully.



Pictured are representatives from schools at the presentation of 'Golden Haze' in Tea Tree Gully, SA

DFA Youth Adviser Profile

Amy Banson



Amy Banson is a 24 year old University student studying a double degree in Social Work and Theology who supports young people in her profession working with disadvantaged youth.

Amy enjoys setting herself personal challenges that has included long-distance walks. Her first walk, from Brisbane to Canberra called Walk With a Rose became a national awareness raising event about Acquired Brain Injury and the lack of respite care available in Australia. It raised an amount of \$50,000 and was featured on Australian Story, The Footy Show, The Today Show the State Focus program as well as publications in both rural and national newspapers.

Amy has since completed another initiative called 'Strength to Speak' which was for depression and anxiety awareness. With a lot of local and national support she worked hard to create the 'Strength to Speak' program that was placed in 425 schools across Australia. The promotion for this program was a walk that she completed from Perth to Canberra just last year.

Amy's interest has expanded into other areas of mental health, including depression and Amy began to explore the link between drugs and depressive mental conditions.

In 2008, Amy has joined Drug Free Australia's Youth Advisory Team and aims to help DFA educate young people and their families about the harms of alcohol and illicit drugs.

We are delighted to announce that Amy was named Young Canberra Citizen of the Year on 13th April - a well deserved honour.

Our International Links



DFA Meetings in the United States – secure support for United Nations Drug Control Treaties

In January 2008, DFA held meetings with three affiliated groups in the United States in order to develop some strategies to combat illicit drug use globally. Meetings were focused in Washington DC and Florida. The results of each were very positive for the future direction of DFA and its research base.

"There is much that we have in common with the United States and much that we can learn", said Jo Baxter, DFA's Executive Officer. For example, the Office of National Drug Control concentrates far more on demand reduction as a prevention strategy than we have done to date, in Australia. It is also refreshing to experience a genuine sharing of information and research across the Pacific. We really must support the initiatives to protect the **United Nations Treaties**", said Ms Baxter.

Pictured - Calvina Fay, Executive Director, Drug Free America Foundation (right) with Jo Baxter, EO of Drug Free Australia.

Moving Forward in Drug Prevention in 2008



Mr Craig Thompson
Chair, Drug Free Australia

Over the past 12 months, Drug Free Australia has made great progress and has become a viable, effective peak body in drug prevention

Our Vision that **'communities are well informed about the harms of illicit drugs and empowered with anti-drug messages'** is gathering momentum, giving people, (many for the first time) a sense of hope that things can change for the better. Most importantly, they no longer feel alone in their struggle against the devastation caused by illicit drug use in their lives.

Our high profile Board is working hard to progress our mission well into 2008.

Some of our major achievements to date have included:

- Establishing a national secretariat to administer and coordinate operations.
- Building an interactive website which is gaining an increasing number of 'hits' daily.
- Convening International Conference in April 2007 in Adelaide.
- Communicating evidence-based policy issues via six (6) research papers.

- Running a National Schools Competition – *'Let's Keep Drug Free'*.
- Forging strong community links and a growing supporter base comprising in excess 13,000 people as well as 66 Australian organisations, with memberships in excess of 200,000 people.
- Developing international affiliations, with a target of 80 in the next 12 months.

Regional seminars have now commenced, with the first being a successful lunch time seminar in Melbourne, sponsored by the Box Hill RSL. Others in Hobart and Canberra followed, with a pleasing response. In Tasmania, keynote speaker **Dr David Walters** gave an excellent perspective on the medical aspects of drug addiction and the importance of preventative measures. In Canberra we were able to share the podium with **Kim Fleming, Manager of 'Karralika'**, a well respected therapeutic rehabilitation facility in the ACT. These forums will continue in 2008 we invite people to make contact about them.

There is also an initiative to work with school communities, integrating a youth leadership program into the Middle School curriculum and enabling students to lead their communities in 'drug free' solutions for their local areas.

For a list of Board members and their profiles, go to: <http://www.drugfree.org.au/about/directors>



Organisers of the Community Forum in the ACT from left to right - Major General Peter Phillips AO MC; Jo Baxter, Executive Officer; Amy Banson, Youth Adviser; Craig Thompson, DFA Chair.

If you are interested in finding out more about Drug Free Australia in 2008, or to volunteer to assist, please be in touch with our secretariat – email: admin@drugfree.org.au or phone: **08 8244 1185**. You can also fill out the support forms on the back page of this newsletter.

Your Opinion Corner

Binge Drinking – sometimes the obvious is overlooked ...

In 1974 in Australia, the legal age to consume alcohol was dropped from 21 to 18 years. Since then we have seen a whole generation of young Australians who have grown up thinking that it's safe to drink to excess – that it's a 'right of passage'.

Interestingly, the drinking age has been raised **back up to 21** in the United States. The subsequent research from the US (from its National Traffic Safety Administration) has revealed that **by raising the drinking age back up to 21, 16,409 lives have been saved from road death, over a sixteen year period.** The estimates from the study show that the raised minimum age drinking laws in all states have reduced traffic fatalities in 18 to 20 year olds by 13%.



Apart from reducing road carnage, raising the drinking age is one of the key factors in reducing overall alcohol and drug abuse. Alcohol is the main gateway drug. When people delay the start of alcohol use to 21 they are less likely to develop addiction to alcohol or any other drug.

Delaying the onset of alcohol use also falls in line with the latest research on the development of the adolescent brain. A thirteen year long US National

Institute of Mental Health study confirms research that shows a delay of drinking (and its likely gateway into other drugs) till 21 reduces the harm from these substances. **This 13 year longitudinal study using MRI has produced no other counter research.**

By allowing a substance-free maturity of the prefrontal cortex and the development of a fully functioning brain, capable of understanding consequences of decisions, the risk of dependence and addiction to drugs and alcohol for those who delay drug and alcohol experimentation till 21 is considerably minimised.

If Australian decision-makers are finding it 'too hard' to contemplate, perhaps they should explore further how the United States managed to

change the age back up to 21 in its 50 states. This is a country that has a far greater population base and diverse legal system to contend with, than we do in Australia.

The situation in Australia has reached crisis point – how much longer will be equivocate and procrastinate, without making decisions that will really make a difference?

Wendy Herbert – Coalition Against Drugs, WA



Hep C Alarm

In March 2007, in relation to two studies, a research team from the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research based at the University of NSW reported that Australia's heroin addicts have some of the highest Hepatitis C rates in the world, and that one-third of prisoners suffer from it.

Also reported on was a study of more than 200 injecting drug users in Sydney's south-west showing that for every one hundred new users followed for a year, forty-six became infected with Hep C. This new user figure is frightening. Up to forty-percent of injecting drug users share their needles. So, project the new user scene if free needles were given out in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). To further illustrate the needle danger, consider that if as little as a quarter of a percent of a legal product purporting to be health-oriented was known to spread a potentially fatal disease upon sharing, it would be withdrawn immediately. Fortunately, at this stage the Chief Minister has ruled out needles in the AMC and its obvious why.

**Colliss Parrett
Australian Family Association (ACT)**

THE ROAD TO TRUE RECOVERY

A rehabilitation worker's perspective

Betty Roberts OAM - founding member of Caroline House and founder of Holyoake Tasmania Inc



Yesterday I went to pick up a young woman, whom the police had rescued and taken to her mother's three times in the past three weeks. (Her two children had been removed from her care and placed with their grandmother in a one-bedroom unit some 16 months previously).

When the young woman asked me to take her to 'Detox' I was encouraged and filled with hope that at last she meant to do something. She had also arranged a bed at the Salvation Army Bridge Program to follow.

When I arrived, the woman staged an argument with her mother - standard avoidance behaviour that shifts the focus off her onto another. There was little I could do as I watched the grandmother and the two boys beg her to "go and get well". The boys' pleading fell on deaf ears, as she is so sick that asking her to relinquish her drugs, is akin to asking her to stop breathing!

With the opportunity lost my only consolation was that, in all likelihood, the Detox experience would have failed because it was a medical detox that would have exchanged her cocktail of drugs, washed down with alcohol, to sedation with Valium (or some other replacement drug). It is those who withdraw with competent regular observation in a 'Social' rather than 'Medical Detox' situation **with only emergency intervention** that gain the opportunity to discover just how sick they are.

My long experience with people addicted to a smorgasbord of drugs and/or alcohol has shown me that the 'drug of choice' is the user's number one priority and that they will do anything to stay on them.

There has long been a belief that addicts must 'hit bottom' before they accept help, but this is not necessarily so, as early successful intervention can occur after working first with family members. Pain is nature's motivator and, since it is the family who absorb the pain, they are ideally situated to intervene once they have had their needs met and have been shown how.

Harm Minimisation in practice, is a policy of false compassion that enables the addict to remain sick and go on using, by supplying them with

replacement drugs, free needles and 'safe' places to use.

The true Road to Recovery is effective, sustained recovery-based rehabilitation, that enables people to make the necessary changes in themselves to stay off drugs. The treatment focus should be on rehabilitation programs.



Betty Roberts (right) with staff and residents of Caroline House, Tasmania

A recovered drug addict's viewpoint

Ryan's Road Back – a 'rare and remarkable' experience

Just out of primary school, he was being offered marijuana for the first time. *"TRY it ... it won't hurt you,"* these words led Ryan Hidden to eventually hit rock bottom.

"I was 13 and was at a party at a mate's place and the parents weren't home," Ryan, now 20, says. "I went in very naive and didn't believe there were any ramifications. I believed I could use illicit drugs safely. But unfortunately that wasn't the case and I went on to become a drug addict."

Ryan, of Gawler in SA, said the marijuana habit took over his life for five years and he also "dabbled in meth and ecstasy". He said the habit determined his choice of friends and, at the lowest point, he was living in his car.

"I didn't eat all that often and spent all my money on drugs."

"I was skinny, I had terrible acne, bags under my eyes I was a wreck, a mess." At 16 he went into drug rehab but relapsed two days after completing the course.

"I started to suffer paranoia and mental health effects and became violent towards my parents, who asked me to leave home."

"I was asked to leave school as well and I was living in a caravan but couldn't keep up with the repayments.

"It was when I was living in my car all alone and I was convinced I was going insane."

At 18, Ryan's recovery began in earnest after completing a drug rehabilitation program in Elizabeth: "It was the most liberating thing I experienced, to realise that I do have a future and can contribute to society again."

A lot of government-run programs are about stabilising drug users and helping them maintain their habit but most drug addicts don't enjoy being addicts. "Drugbeat take a holistic approach."

He has completed Year 12 at a Senior College with a tertiary entrance rank of 95.9 and has just commenced a double degree in law and psychology at Flinders University.

He said school drug education programs were often based on safe drug use rather than prevention. He believed drug testing at schools was one way to prevent teenagers from experimenting at an early age.

"There's a perception that marijuana is a soft drug it's almost more socially acceptable to light up a bong or joint than a cigarette these days.

"I'm certain that most parents don't discover that their kids' use of drugs until it has developed into an addiction.

"A harm prevention policy needs to be looked at to ensure they're informed of the true health effects.



Ryan is the first to admit that he is one of the lucky ones to recover. He is founder of the Recovered Drug Users League of SA and has, this year, commenced a double degree at Flinders University, SA.

My Addiction - Anon

You can't describe it, unless you've seen it.

You can't explain it, unless you've done it.

You can't imagine it, unless you've been there.

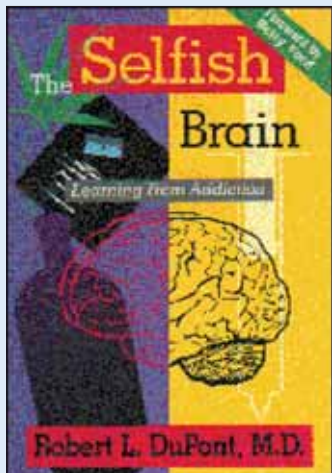
Then, it never goes away.

Recommended Reading ...

'The Selfish Brain'

Dr Robert Dupont

The Selfish Brain: Learning From Addiction takes a comprehensive, no-holds-barred look at the easy path to drug addiction and the tough road to recovery. This book can help people confront addiction in their own lives and in their families by exploring the biological roots of addiction and the way addicts are allowed to deny their addiction by compassionate, well-meaning people. Based on his experience as a specialist on addiction and as a policymaker, former drug czar Robert L. DuPont, M.D., advocates "tough-love" measures to strip away the denial that allows addicts to remain trapped in their destructive habit and place them on the **road to recovery**. He examines treatment options, especially 12-step programs, which he believes are the most effective path to recovery. Powerful and often controversial, *The Selfish Brain* provides an honest examination of an insidious, destructive disease.



Drug Free Australia is proud to represent the views of the many Australians who want to be free from the devastation caused by illicit drugs in this country. We are pleased to acknowledge initial funding from the Department of Health and Ageing to assist in establishing DFA as peak body, to promote the prevention of illicit drug use nationally.

How can I help?



People often ask, what can I do as an individual, to help prevent the harms of drugs – the problem is so big. Here is one MAJOR way –

GO TO and sign the

www.ungassdrugs.org SUNDIAL PETITION

Why?

The United Nations Treaties on Drug Control are under threat!

In 2008, countries from around the world will convene to discuss the United Nation's Political Declaration from 1998 which laid out goals and expectations for drug policy worldwide. This declaration served as a re-affirmation for the international laws against drug use which guide policy in almost every country in the world. **However, these international agreements are under threat of repeal** from those that aim to **legalise drugs**.

If you don't want to see more liberal drug policies in Australia, please visit www.ungassdrugs.org and sign our petition in support of the United Nations and their drug control efforts.

We know that a successful policy focuses on a balanced strategy of drug prevention, evidence-based treatment, international supply reduction based on global cooperation and good-will, and the highest standards of research.



The words of **Antonio Maria Costa**, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:

'Evidence shows a **strong correlation between drug availability and drug abuse**. Let us therefore reduce the availability of drugs - through tackling supply and demand - and thereby reduce the risks to health and security'.

We urge you to pass this message and the website to anyone in support of the balanced, and successful international drug conventions.

DFA builds a support base

The people of Australia have begun to demonstrate their concern about illicit drugs in a big way. Two major events have resulted in drug Free Australia establishing multi-lateral links with anti-drug organisations.

These are a 'Harm Prevention Supporter' campaign and DFA's formal response to the bi-partisan 'Winnable War on Drugs' report and recommendations.

When combining these two, data indicates that Drug Free Australia now has direct links with individuals, families and **over 72 organisations representing more than 216,500 people**. To sign up as a Harm Prevention Supporter, just fill out the coupon below and send it to us.

For the cost of a postage stamp... You can make a difference

Become a Harm Prevention Supporter, simply by filling out the coupon below and mailing it to Drug Free Australia.

Declaration of Support

I/we wish to register my/our support for the campaign to refocus Australia's Illicit Drug Policy from 'harm minimisation to one of 'Harm Prevention'.



To become a Harm prevention Supporter, go to www.drugfree.org.au or fill in this coupon

Name: Address: Postcode:

Phone: Email:

Number of people represented in your declaration

Signature of authorised person

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