



Promoting Illicit Drug Prevention Initiatives Nationally

Annual Summary – 2015

1. Introduction

Drug Free Australia is a national not-for-profit organization that works within communities across Australia and internationally, to push back against illicit drug use. We put 'prevention first', to reduce the demand for harmful substances including methamphetamine-type stimulants (especially ICE). This year we have continued to work through our dedicated board and volunteers, as well as growing numbers of affiliates, to achieve our mission. The following is an update on activities undertaken this year, as well as projections for 2016.

2. 10-Point Plan

PART A – INTERNAL / MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

- Point 1** To establish a **national database** of organisations and individuals who are committed to the Federal Governments anti drugs policy.
- Point 2** To **communicate** with these organisations and individuals on a regular basis through online and printed publications (eg. newsletters, websites, journals and other correspondence) and to mobilise them when there is media debate regarding drugs issues.
- Point 3** The establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive web-site

PART B - EXTERNAL – PUBLIC AND MEDIA

- Point 4** To conduct and coordinate research activities regarding the drug issues generally both here and overseas and produce appropriate papers and **publications** regarding same.
- Point 5** To co-ordinate visits of overseas **anti drugs experts** and to facilitate seminars and media activities for these people. Regular seminars and media activities to be arranged for local experts.
- Point 6** To co-ordinate a national **media response** to pro drug activists when they are active in the media. For this purpose appropriate **expert spokesman** to be made available to the media.
- Point 7** To facilitate regular **media releases** to all suburban and metropolitan media regarding local anti-drug issues. Local members of parliament to be fully informed and resourced as appropriate.

PART C - EXTERNAL – GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & OTHER POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

- Point 8** As required **liaise with and assist Government** and other Government agencies (including Police) regarding the Government anti drugs message and other anti drugs initiatives.
- Point 9** To prepare documentation and **submissions** to parliamentary inquiries
- Point 10** To **inform and resource** local members of parliament as appropriate.

3. Key Achievements – 2014

3.1 Community Communication and the DFA website – www.drugfree.org.au

1. DFA Website –

An up-to-date website has been maintained during 2015. It is the main vehicle to inform communities, governments and other interested parties. DFA has a growing number of strong affiliates and groups both in Australia and world wide, thanks to the dedicated work of our Queensland Director, Herschel Baker. Go to the website – www.drugfree.org.au for more publications, submissions to governments and a rich array of informative material for all in the community who are concerned about the harms of illicit drugs.

Currently we are updating the website to allow even more current information to be published. This should be up and running in the early new year.

2. Meetings, Conferences and Forums

DFA representatives, Gary Christian and Dr Ross Colquhoun met with Gillian Skinner, NSW government in relation to the forthcoming medicinal cannabis trials in that state. They also met with Hon. Bronwyn Bishop on drug trends and issues. Both meetings were very informative. We also continue to meet with local rotary clubs to present updates and solutions for our emerging generations. Those clubs with direct links to schools are the ones we target. Our direct link to the Federal government remains strong through DFA Chair, Major Brian Watters who is able to make contact with those in government, past and present, who share our concern about liberalizing drug policy even further. The Executive Officer, Jo Baxter remains a member of the Australian National Advisory Council on Drugs (ANACAD) and is able to meet with key stakeholders regularly.

Internationally

- In December/January we signed up in support of an important drug policy framework 'Drug Policy Futures' <http://www.wfad.se/papers>
- In February, DFA's Executive Officer was appointed to an international rotary board PRAG AP (Prospective Rotarian Action Group Addiction Prevention) to assist in the creation of a robust movement by Rotary to link with schools and promote demand reduction programs. It hopes to facilitate and support the development of a global grant and may give administrative support to interested clubs. A presentation was made to the EU Parliament earlier this year and it is expected that there is much that will be progressed in March and April 2016, in conjunction with the forthcoming United Nations meetings (UNGASS).
- In August we had a representative attend the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) conference in Singapore in August. The outcomes were strongly in support of the United Nations Drug Control Conventions. Go to the following link for more information in initiatives being taken by our affiliates:
http://www.cnb.gov.sg/Libraries/CNB_Newsroom_Files/APFAD_2015.sflb.ashx

3. Research Papers, Submissions and Meetings with Politicians

3.1 Medicinal Cannabis: Several submissions have been published this year, and two of particular importance are submissions to the Tasmanian and ACT governments. Both regions have rejected the sanctioning of medical marijuana at this stage. These submissions can be found on our website, www.drugfree.org.au



DFA representatives have also met with NSW politicians about their plans for medicinal cannabis trials and are reasonably satisfied that the approach being used is being done with care and the safety of the community as a priority. We are preparing a letter to the Federal Minister for Health related to her imminent legislation being put forward regarding Medicinal Cannabis. The aim will be to keep the doors of discussion open, by offering advice on DFA links with international experts who have directly experienced some of the pitfalls in strategies being advanced in the United States and elsewhere. DFA concurs that, if the Federal Government can show strong leadership in the establishment of quality control mechanisms to conduct a safe and genuine medicinal program in growing cannabis in Australia AND if the proposed state trials indicate a place for new cannabis-based medicines, this is a positive and helpful initiative. **However, we hold firm to the view that any avenue that opens up means to legalise cannabis for recreational purposes would be an unwise and unsafe choice to make and a disaster for our emerging generation.**

DFA's submission to the '**Commission on the Alcohol and Other Drugs Discussion Paper**', convened by the Queensland Mental Health Commission can be located at www.qmhc.qld.gov.au

3.2 Ice/Methamphetamines

Submissions have been made both at state and territory levels as well as to the Ice Taskforce. For example DFA made a submission to the Discussion Paper: '*Ways to combat ice addiction in Queensland*' via the Department of the Premier of Cabinet. <http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/assets/ways-to-combat-ice-addiction-in-queensland.pdf>

DFA representatives attended an Ice Taskforce 'round table' representing both DFA and Dalgarno Institute. A paper on the importance of mandatory treatment for Ice addicted people was submitted, following the roundtable. Overall, DFA is pleased with the final outcomes of the Ice Taskforce's work and the resultant package of funding and resources being provided by the Federal Government. We will be monitoring the rollout of these.

3.3 Internationally, Drug Free Australia has uploaded papers to the UNGASS website and can be found at:

<http://www.unodc.org/ungass2016/en/contributions-ngos-drug-free-australia.html>. Additionally, we are promoting the latest '**Drug Policy Futures Report**' which demonstrates a way forward without needing to legalise illicit drugs. It showcases numerous 'real world' examples of prevention and demand reduction. For a copy of the Report, go to <http://drugpolicyfutures.org/publications/>

3.4 The Failure of Harm Reduction in Australia:

A paper on this important issue has been produced by DFA, funded by Dalgarno Institute and has been used in at least one Victorian forum.

Please contact us for copies of any of the above, or go to our website at www.drugfree.org.au

4 Media and Public Debate

DFA ran a 10 week media campaign via the Macquarie Network in March and April 2015. It was well received and an opportunity to highlight the need for Demand Reduction. Community Service Announcements were used, thanks to our Patron, Dr Margaret Court, some real time interviews were conducted and were complemented by a series of news items and statements read by the announcer. We thank Mr Colliss Parrett and Mr Jay Bacik for their leadership in this initiative. Parent information booklets that were promoted during the media campaign are available on our website at www.drugfree.org.au

In October, we partnered with the Dalgarno Institute to host Dr Kevin Sabet in Melbourne. He presented at the NCPIC conference and at the Dalgarno Institute's AGM.



Dr Sabet's message is powerful and he emphasizes the need to **push back against the legalisation of marijuana/cannabis** because of its direct links with tobacco companies and the real likelihood of Big Marijuana emerging as an even bigger industry than Big Tobacco. For more go to:<http://kevinsabet.com/biography>

3 Future projections – 2016

- To build on and grow our supporter/affiliate base, establishing working projects where appropriate
- To seek funding through government and corporate sponsorship for demand reduction initiatives locally and nationally
- To be active in the lead up to UNGASS 2016 and align with WFAD and VNGOC at an international level.