

WHAT IS THE COST TO SOCIETY OF EVENTS CAUSED BY CANNABIS USE?

The cost and burden of disease of Cannabis use to individuals, families and communities creates an unnecessary harm in many ways.

The case of driving under the influence is just one example. The US National Traffic Safety Administration stated in 2010 report: "Each fatality resulted in an average discounted lifetime cost of \$1.4 million." 15 years later the cost has risen exponentially

Importantly - the argument that legalising or decriminalising cannabis will diminish the illegal market is flawed. These costs are never able to be covered by taxation, because, as with tobacco, the illegal markets move in.

Below is a List of Events that result from Cannabis Use – as per studies in the United States and Canada. Australian states that decriminalise or legalise cannabis are already seeing the same costly issues.

Health Care

Hospital

- Neonatal ward admission – postpartum addiction withdrawal, low birth weight at delivery
- Emergency Room Visits/Hospitalizations

Allergic reactions

- Arrythmias
- Hyperemesis
- Myocardial Infarction
- Respiratory damage -emphysema, bullous lung disease, vape pen damage
- Stroke
- Suicide attempt
- Thrombosis
- Acute Mania
- Injuries to Hospital Staff Members

Car Crashes

- Driver
- Victims – other cars drivers, passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists



Mental Health

- Mental Health Clinic Use increase – addiction
- Anxiety
- Cannabis Use Disorder
- Depression
- Psychosis
- Schizophrenia
- Suicide
- Brain Abnormalities



Ancillary

- Poison Control Centre increased calls
- Adults
- Paediatric
- Animals
- Exposure to pets – Veterinary costs
- Pre-diabetes risk
- Sterility in males
- Abortion risk in females
- Testicular cancer



Business

- Cost for monitoring for drug use – pre employment, during employment, result in firing individual
- Loss of Work Productivity – including absenteeism
- Workers Comp claims – injury at work – costs passed on to consumer of products
- Loss of business due to marijuana shop being near business

Society – School

- Expulsions
- Referrals to Law Enforcement
- Suspensions
- Being Under Influence at school
- Possession at school/Selling/sharing marijuana



Society – Law Enforcement

- more citations for public use of marijuana
- car crashes with THC involvement
- crime – violent/property
- increased burglary
- black market/organized crime
- interdictions/diversion to other states
- crime associated with marijuana business site – robberies, assaults
- marijuana concentrate extraction lab explosions

Society - Driving

- Traffic fatalities – 2010 data \$1.4M/fatality
- Traffic accidents
- Driving under influence – 2015 1st DUI costs \$10,270

Society - Property

- loss of property value
- loss of business i.e. Holiday Inn
- Fire damage costs
- Environmental – water, trespass, poisoning, excessive energy use

Society – Social Services

- Homelessness
- Unemployment

Source: *Michael Akindeju*

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Phillip Drum, Pharm.D FCSHP



KERRY'S KORNER



My topic this month relates to the question of mandatory drug treatment and rehabilitation.

I have felt led to write about the question of 'mandatory drug treatment', which is quite controversial, although it shouldn't be. My urge to touch on it has been spurred on by some recent situations I've encountered.

Over the past 15 years, in my capacity as both an author of my own horror drug-use story, and a passionate Drug & Alcohol Awareness educator, I have been approached by many people who are desperately seeking advice and help regarding substance use addictions.

Most commonly the contact has been made by distressed family members, whose lives are being turned up-side-down because of their loved one's battle with substance use disorder (addiction).

In the past two weeks, I have been contacted by two people.

- A woman whom I'd known from several years ago, calling out for help for her child who is battling poly-drug use disorder. This child is 19 and suffered a shocking trauma when they were younger and like so many people had turned to substance use, in an attempt to block out the pain of the trauma. This is a very common scenario that regularly leads to addiction.
- I also had another older person come to me to talk about a 'slip up' they'd had, that had ended their relationship.

Over the years I have encountered this scenario repeatedly as numerous families have reached out to me for help. In that time, I have only managed to assist two people to successfully complete rehab. A huge number of people suffering from substance use disorder can't see that they have a problem and won't reach out for the help they need. Of course, their capacity to think clearly is usually affected by the substances they are using. So, here's the controversial part. I strongly believe there needs to be a space for compulsory rehabilitation. I am aware that the best possible outcomes from rehab usually arise from voluntary admission to a rehab facility.

However, when a person has been so badly affected by their drug use, that it is destroying the lives of people all around them, and putting lives in danger, I believe those who care the most for them should have an avenue to make that decision for them. Naturally, there would need to be criteria for selecting suitable candidates.

Let's use Methamphetamines for example. 'Meth' is so addictive that most users can slip into addiction extremely quickly. Meth or Ice as it's commonly known, is comprised of a combination of chemicals that can totally alter brain function, leading drug users into desperate, often crime-filled journeys, to feed their addiction. This situation is not only destroying families across this nation but is putting the lives of both the meth user and innocent people in serious danger. I have asked several parents if they would have their drug ravaged child admitted into rehab if that were possible, and the answer has been an overwhelming, "Yes. In a heartbeat".

KERRYIN'S KORNER CONTINUED

The trail of chaos and destruction each child's addiction parents, partners, (and yes, sadly, the drug user's children and other innocent people) is catastrophic and the number of these situations is growing exponentially, as drug 'normalisation' spreads across the country.

- Innocent people are being attacked, especially with the increase of home invasions, as these drug users commit robberies to fund their habit. Just recently, it was reported that legendary, retired AFL player and coach, Mick Malthouse, was attacked during a home invasion in his apartment. Unfortunately, the perpetrators escaped, but this certainly fits the pattern of drug user invasions.
- Other innocent people are being killed on the roads causing a flow-on effect of distress for their families.
- Communities suffer the financial cost to their communities – especially in emergency departments in our hospitals, the increase in shop lifting to pay for the 'habits' of drug taking.
- And of course, in the process the user is putting their own life at risk both from their illegal escapades and their drug use.

Our governments are spending big money on 'safe injecting rooms', which is plainly normalising drug use and simply sustaining lives, not helping them to recover. This is a misinformed idea that is wasting millions of dollars annually.

Government funding should be put into more top-quality dual diagnosis rehabs where drug users can be cared for properly as their brain recovers (at least partially) from the rewiring caused by the drug use.

I am convinced that this is simply common sense. These people need help. However, rather than help them to recover, the current narrative is to accept their choices. Anything other than accepting is classed as stigmatizing. This is ridiculous! Assisting someone to get the help they need is not called stigmatizing, it is called caring. It also goes towards protecting the people of this country.

This once wonderful nation of Australia is being considerably damaged by the flow-on effects of drug use disorders and this type of thinking.



Trauma & Addiction

Join our global campaign #StartWithTruth

Drug Free Australia has been invited to link with the Drug Free America Foundation and the World Federation Against Drug, to increase recognition of the impact of trauma on people starting to use drugs.

We now invite you to join our global campaign, Start with Truth: Trauma & Addiction, launched today by the Trauma & Substance Use Disorder Action Force (TSAFI).

Why? Trauma is too often misunderstood, minimized, or left out of systems of care. Prevention, treatment, and recovery programs frequently overlook the role trauma plays—even though it is one of the strongest predictors of substance use and the development of substance use disorders.

Trauma isn't just a story. It leaves a neurological and biological imprint on the brain, body, and entire communities. As global substance use rises, vast resources are directed toward treatment, yet the numbers stubbornly persist. Ignoring trauma means we are treating symptoms without addressing the root cause—undermining both prevention and long-term recovery. That's why TSAFI exists: to make the connection between trauma and substance use central to every conversation, every intervention, every solution. TSAFI is about building a new foundation. With this campaign, we're not just raising awareness—we are sparking a paradigm shift in how the world views and responds to substance use. Over the coming weeks, we'll be releasing a series of reels leading up to a final message—all available in English and Spanish.

Join us by following TSAFI on Instagram and share the #StartWithTruth campaign among your networks to ensure the message reaches many. We invite you to reflect, engage, and share your thoughts, questions, or comments with us on social media or by email clincoln@dfaf.org. These insights will help shape the conversation throughout the campaign and during our upcoming live Trauma Lab.



The Netherlands' current position on drug policy

For years, the Netherlands has adopted a very 'soft' or permissive drug policy. This alarms families and destroys even more innocents.

Quick Guide to Dutch Political Parties on Drugs Policy

Progressive/Liberal parties (more open to legalization):

- D66 – Wants full legalization and regulation of cannabis (including cultivation). Supports local experiments with MDMA. Focus on public health, not punishment.
- GroenLinks (GreenLeft) – Supports legalization of cannabis, ecstasy, and mushrooms. Wants drug testing, user rooms, and harm reduction.
- PvdA (Labour) – Favors a regulated cannabis chain. Hard drugs remain illegal, but supports drug checking.
- SP (Socialists) – Supports regulation of cannabis and drug testing to protect users. No criminalization of users.
- Pirate Party & Greens-Pirates – Favor full legalization/decriminalization of all drugs, with strong regulation and education.
- BIJ1 – Wants legalization of both soft and hard drugs, combined with good information campaigns.
- VOLT – Supports controlled decriminalization.

Centrist/Mixed positions:

- DENK – Supports regulation of cannabis but opposes legalization of hard drugs.
- VVD (Liberals) – No strong stance on legalization; wants stricter action against nuisance and unsafe drug use.
- FvD (Forum for Democracy) – Supports gradual cannabis legalization but fewer coffeeshops, especially near schools.
- PvdD (Party for the Animals) – Supports cannabis legalization and education, but protective rules around children.
- 50PLUS – Focuses on discouraging alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

Conservative/Religious parties (strict prohibition):

- CDA (Christian Democrats) – Opposes tolerance policies, wants to keep drugs illegal, and increase prevention.
- ChristenUnie – Wants a “drug-free society,” ending tolerance policies and increasing punishments.
- SGP – Strongly against any legalization, wants all coffeeshops banned.
- PVV & JA21 – Support harsher punishments, stricter enforcement, and ending tolerance.

THE NETHERLANDS' CURRENT POSITION ON DRUG POLICY CONTINUED...

Clearly the majority of the Netherlands drug policies are very permissive. What can be done to turn the tide?

Take a look at OVOM – [One Voice, One Message](#)

Thankfully a powerful 'grassroots' organisation has been established.

'One Voice, One Message' (OVOM) a grassroots organisation, originated in the Netherlands and now has growing support from many international groups. We at Drug Free Australia actively support and contribute to OVOM's goals.

OVOM, together with families who have greatly suffered under the long-term acceptance of drug use by government policy have now developed the Eindhoven Declaration. They were helped by many international experts and concerned individuals.

[Please consider signing this in support of this important cause.](#)

You can access and sign the Declaration here: ovom.org



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THE MAJOR BRIAN WATTERS YOUTH PREVENTION INFLUENCERS' AWARD



COULD YOU BE THE NEXT **YOUTH INFLUENCER SCHOLARSHIP** RECIPIENT?

Drug Free Australia (DFA) is an NGO that is working in close cooperation with the Rotary Action Group for Addiction Prevention. In partnership, DFA announced an award to be offered in honour of the work of Major Brian Watters AO, to young people between the ages of 17 and 25 who are interested in training to be Youth Prevention Influencers.

WHAT'S ON OFFER

- 1) Financial assistance for YPI training, up to \$500 as follows:
 - the first \$100 being awarded at commencement of training as a YPI;
 - \$100 awarded upon successful completion of the training; \$300 awarded upon completion of practical policies and practice to help prevent addiction to nominated community groups/ individuals.
- 2) Training – either a 4 hour online or a 1 day face to face session in the nature of addiction and current strategies being used to prevent and/or help people deal with their addiction.
- 3) Mentoring to encourage the development the YPI's own strategies for drug prevention in their communities.
- 4) Assistance with travel to Vienna to be part of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) at the United Nations headquarters – held in mid-March each year, to join other like-minded young people in their endeavours to influence world governments in drug prevention.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Individuals between the ages of 16-29 can be nominated by Rotary Clubs, Senior Secondary Schools and Tertiary Institutions OR they can nominate themselves and seek the backing of their local Rotary club or other body.

Submit a registration of interest, giving reasons for applying. This should include:

- (a) Resume with at least 2 referees including those involved in a Rotary Club or other community body.
- (b) A minimum 500-word statement/essay/video entitled – 'Why and How we could stay Drug Free'

KEY DATES

REGISTRATION OF INTEREST DUE: **November 5 2025**

Scholarship recipients notified by 20 November, with training sessions confirmed by mutual agreement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO APPLY CONTACT: **Jo Baxter** International Board Member

Rotary Action Group For Addiciton Prevention - admin@drugfree.org.au

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ABOUT Major Brian Watters AO

Major Watters devoted his life to working tirelessly to help people of all ages, gender and ethnic backgrounds to return to health when drugs and alcohol had destroyed their lives. In addition, he spent many years as Vice President of the *United Nations International Narcotics Control Board*.

Major Watters was well qualified in this important field, with:

- an Arts Degree from Newcastle (NSW) University, majoring in Medical Sociology.
- Qualified Psychiatric Chaplain and trained at Newcastle University in Addictions Counselling.
- In 1998-2010 he was appointed as Chairman of the Australian National Council on Drugs, the peak Drugs Policy Advisory Body to the Australian Federal Government.
- A member of the National Board of Drug Arm, Australia;
- Member of the Leadership Council of International Substance Abuse and Addiction Coalition.
- Past President of the N.S.W. Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (NADA) with a Membership of more than 100 Agencies.
- Served on the N.S.W. Health Minister's Drug Advisory Council.
- In 2005 he was elected to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) of the United Nations – based in Vienna.
- In 2007 appointed Vice President of the International Narcotics Control Board and
- was the Chair of the Prime Ministers Drug Advisory Council (ANCD) for over 10 years.
- President and Board Member of Drug Free Australia from 2002-2024.



FOR MORE VISIT: RAG-AP.ORG

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUSTRALIA?

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD?

FIND OUT HERE >

Pill Testing -
Why we say NO!

CHECK OUT OUR
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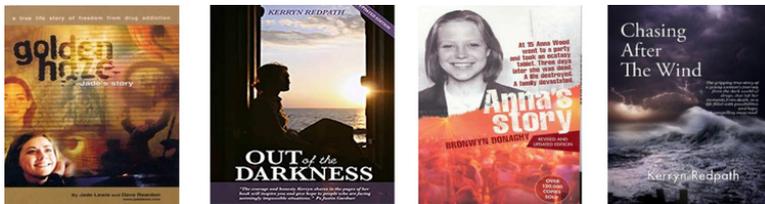


RESOURCES

Click on the images below to access the online resources



Books and more...



For WCTU Primary & Secondary programs contact Dawn Stark:
drug-free@bigpond.com

DAESY



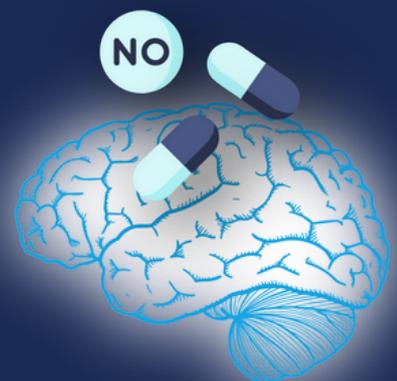
For more information on any of the above, contact:
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