



Comment

As you will see from the articles on this month's newsletter, momentum is gathering around the need for change not only in Australian drug policy but internationally with the United Nations General Assembly Special Session to be on The World Drug Problem in April 2016. At the recent drug summit hosted by the Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform the main message from HRA to parliamentarians was that with evidence on your side, the overwhelming support of experts in the field and a changing landscape across the world, there was no need to be afraid of change but rather it is time to embrace it. HRA is committed to working with all parties and communities on achieving a safer and more humane response to drug use. The continual punishment and criminalisation of people who use drugs and its far reaching negative impacts on people's lives simply has to stop. The more members we have the more momentum we have to help individuals, families and communities across Australia to achieve this change. We also want to acknowledge Ms Annie Madden, an HRA Board member and co-founder, on her years of dedicated service, professionalism and achievement with peer based organisations. She has been a leading figure for so long it is hard to imagine her not at the forefront of these organisations. We wish Annie nothing but success on the next phase of her journey.

Gino Vumbaca
President
Harm Reduction Australia

HRA media

HRA has called on the Australian Government to be open and transparent on the position it will be taking at the next UNGASS and with the deliberations and decisions of current government-only drug committees. You can read the HRA's Huffington Post opinion piece at this link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gino-vumbaca/when-it-comes-to-handling-drugs-we-need-to-be-transparent_b_9482950.html?utm_hp_ref=australia

‘Shameful Failure’ Global leaders demand an end to the \$100bn so-called war on drugs

- In April, world leaders will come together in New York for a UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drug policy – the first in 18 years.
- In a new book Sir Richard Branson, Nick Clegg & 11 global opinion leaders highlight drug policies which should be pursued by those attending UNGASS to end the war on drugs once and for all.
- Global spending on drug law enforcement exceeds \$100bn (£70.4bn) per annum – roughly the same spent on foreign aid worldwide.
- Prohibitive drug laws have created a vast criminal industry with an estimated annual turnover of \$320bn (£225bn pounds) globally.

Global leaders and experts, including New Zealand’s Associate Minister of Health, Peter Dunne and Nick Clegg, have come together to share their ground-breaking strategies in new book ‘Ending the War on Drugs’ and call for an end to the suffering, the waste and the violence created by the so-called War on Drugs.

For more than five decades, prohibitionist policies around the world have failed to reduce the supply of or demand for illegal drugs and the book highlights some damning statistics which point to the ‘shameful failure’ in tackling the global drug crisis:

- The cost of this war on drugs has been around \$100bn per annum, roughly the same amount spent on foreign aid worldwide.
- These policies have put criminal organisations in control of a global market estimated to turn over more than \$320 billion per year.
- While the drug trade flourishes, millions worldwide continue to be criminalised for non-violent drug offences, leading to more than 1.4 million arrests in the US in 2014 alone – 83 per cent (1.1m) of those arrests are solely for possession.
- As a result, roughly one in 110 US adults is currently in some form of detention.

Worldwide, 33 countries still impose the death penalty for drug-related offenses. In Iran, up to 80 per cent of the more than 1,000 executions recorded in 2015 have been linked to drug violations.

Interest in drug policy reform has been growing in recent years, as several US states have begun legalising and regulating cannabis, and as governments around the world are debating new approaches that put health and safety over punishment. But the global opinion formers and contributors to this book are calling for urgent action.

Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Group Founder, said: “It’s high time we stop pretending we have any control over drugs. The only way to wrest back control is to end the drug war, take the markets back from criminal networks and put governments in charge, so that production, supply and use can be regulated via doctors, pharmacists and licensed retailers.”

Peter Dunne, Associate Minister of Health of New Zealand “New Zealand chose to take an innovative, harm- minimisation approach through regulating the market.”

On 19-21 April 2016, world leaders will be given a chance to establish that clear leadership position come together in New York for a UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drug policy – the first in 18 years. UNGASS offers a rare opportunity to put the international community on a pathway to reform of the international treaties that have guided prohibition and repression for so long.

But progress has been sluggish, stifled by governments which still fail to see that a drug-free world is an illusion and that the war on drugs has first and foremost been a war on people.

In Ending the War on Drugs, to be released just weeks before UNGASS, global opinion leaders on the frontlines of the drug debate discuss what can and must be done now to end the suffering, the waste and the violence. Ending the War on Drugs highlights the pitfalls behind drug policy to-date and brings

to light new policies and approaches, which make a clear case for galvanizing governments to end the war on drugs – once and for all.

More information: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1110739/ending-the-war-on-drugs/>

Contributor	Role
Pavel Bem	Former Mayor of Prague
Richard Branson	Founder of Virgin Group
Henrique Fernando Cardoso	Former President of Brazil
Nick Clegg	MP, Former Deputy PM, United Kingdom
Ruth Dreifuss	Former President of Switzerland
Peter Dunne	Associate Minister of Health of New Zealand
Cesar Gaviria	Former President of Colombia
Anand Grover	Former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health
Carl Hart	Psychology Professor, Columbia University
Michel Kazatchkine	UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in EECA
Olusegun Obasanjo	Former President of Nigeria
George Soros	Founder and Chair of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Foundations
Ernesto Zedillo	Former President of Mexico



http://www.unharm.org/filming_police

Support. Don't Punish

The trailer film for the 'Support. Don't Punish. Voices for Drug Policy Reform from Asia' is now released, and can be seen at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7yJfCimhoM>. We hope you enjoy it, and can share it throughout your networks.

The film premiered at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs on 18 March 2016, and will hopefully help with raising awareness on the need to end the incarceration and punishment of people who use drugs, and the need to offer good, voluntary, evidence-based drug treatment and harm reduction - especially in the lead up to UNGASS.

Parliamentary Drug Summit 2016

On 2 March, the Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy and Law Reform held the Parliamentary Drug Summit in Canberra. HRA assisted and participated with a number of board members and advocates speaking at the summit. This link takes you to the Summit's website: <http://www.drugpolicyreform.com.au/>.

Medicinal cannabis bill passes

The Australian Parliament has passed legislation allowing patients and their doctors to access legal supplies of medicinal cannabis products for the management of painful and chronic conditions. The Narcotic Drugs Act will provide for legally-grown cannabis for the manufacture of suitable medicinal cannabis products in Australia, overseen by a national regulator. You can read the Health Minister's media release here: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2016-ley013.htm>.



HRA has joined the global campaign for the 2016 UNGASS

Stop the Harm is a movement of NGOs from around the world who are campaigning for a new global drug policy regime firmly grounded in health, compassion, and human rights. The Stop the Harm website is: <https://stoptheharm.org>.

Here is a link to an animated video which on drug policy and harm reduction: <https://youtu.be/wJUXLqNHCal>.

AIVL farewells our Executive Officer - Annie Madden

Annie Madden, Executive Officer of the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) has announced her resignation from her role at AIVL after 16 years leading the organisation. Annie has made the decision for personal reasons and is looking forward to what the future will bring and to staying connected to a movement and a sector that will continue to be central to her life.

For well over a decade Annie has been guiding the work of AIVL, the national peak body for peer-based drug user organisations in Australia. AIVL has a long and proud history stretching back more than two decades and Annie Madden has been a part of that history from the very early days. She is a leading Australian advocate and is well-known and highly regarded for her commitment, passion and integrity in relation to representing people who use illicit drugs. From meetings with drug users, health professionals, parliamentarians and everything in-between, Annie has made an art-form out of representing the humanity, the diversity and the inherent strength within the drug using community in Australia.

From its beginnings as an unfunded organisation in the late 1980's, Annie has been central to AIVL's development. She commenced as an AIVL Board member through the 1990's, and went on to become AIVL's first Executive Officer in April 2000. Since that time, she has, in partnership with the AIVL staff team, Board and members, worked hard to build both the profile and the reputation of the organisation. It is important to highlight that Annie is not only highly regarded across Australia, but she is also a leading figure internationally in relation to her work representing people who use drugs and her significant skills and knowledge in harm reduction, HIV, hepatitis C, drug policy and law reform, to name just a few key areas of her expertise.

While AIVL and the national BBVs/STIs sector generally are experiencing a great deal of collective uncertainty at the moment, Annie is leaving AIVL with a strong, committed and talented team of dedicated peers who will continue working hard to build upon the vital work of AIVL now and into the future. While Annie moving on will be felt profoundly by the staff, AIVL Board and the sector, the 'flip-side' of such change is the opportunity for renewal and growth. To this end, the AIVL Board together with Annie have been working over the past few weeks to plan transitional arrangements including identifying and securing an interim Executive Officer to take the organisation through to 30 June 2016.

The AIVL Board is pleased to announce that Craig Cooper, currently CEO of Positive Life NSW has accepted the appointment as the Interim EO for AIVL and will commence in the position from Monday 15 March 2016 to allow for a two week handover period with Annie as the out-going EO. AIVL feels very fortunate to have secured someone with Craig's skills and experience and his commitment to peer-based drug user organisations to guide AIVL through the next few months. In due course, the AIVL Board will communicate further with the sector about plans to recruit a new ongoing AIVL EO to take the organisation forward.

The board wishes to formally thank Annie for her extraordinary contribution to AIVL, the sector and most importantly, to people who use drugs during her time as Executive Officer and to wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Niki Parry, AIVL President on behalf of the AIVL Board – 7 March 2016

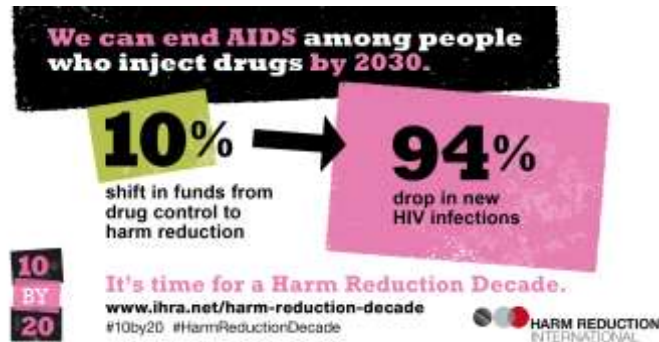
<http://www.aivl.org.au/saveaivl/>



Justice Reinvestment

A new justice reinvestment calculator has been developed to provide the NSW public with essential data on what's happening in their local communities.

See the media release and links to the calculator at: <http://www.justreinvest.org.au/is-this-money-well-spent/>



Harm Reduction Decade

HIV-related deaths and new HIV infections among people who inject drugs could be almost entirely eliminated by 2030 with just a tiny shift in global drug control spending. This is one finding of our report [The Case for a Harm Reduction Decade](#).

The study uses data we have collected over the last 10 years for our biennial [Global State of Harm Reduction](#) reports to assess progress and reflect on challenges faced around the world. Using mathematical modelling, it then outlines the potential impact of increased investment in harm reduction on avoidable health-related harms associated with injecting drug use over the next decade and beyond.

It shows that the redirection of just 7.5% of current drug control spending by 2020 would achieve a 94% cut in new HIV infections among people who use drugs by 2030, and a 93% drop in HIV-related deaths. An estimated US\$100 billion is currently spent on global drug enforcement and control, while only US\$160 million is spent on harm reduction.

Over the last decade, harm reduction has proved to be an approach to drugs that saves lives, saves money, and helps respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of people who use drugs. If commitments can be made to the tiny shift in funding suggested by [our report](#), this year's United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs could mark the start of a Harm Reduction Decade, and by 2030 we could have seen HIV/AIDS virtually wiped out among people who inject drugs.

Civil Society Statement & HRA Statement

<http://www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HRA-UNGASS-NDS-Statement.pdf>

Australia is participating in the upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the world drug problem and at the same time is in the process of reviewing its National Drug Strategy. However, if all that is achieved in 2016 is an exorbitant travel bill for bureaucrats to travel to New York for UNGASS and hollow consultations around the country without any real or meaningful change in either the international treaties or our National Drug Strategy then it will be a shameful waste of money. It will also be yet another slap in the face for many people, families and communities across the country that are facing harm from drug use. HRA is calling on the Australian Government to be transparent on:

1. The membership of the Australian delegation to the UNGASS;
 2. Australia's position in the proposed discussions on the current treaties at UNGASS; and,
 3. Whether it will support the need for a new direction embracing humane harm reduction approaches in both international and domestic strategies.
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Latest Policy Developments and News

[HIV activists fear UN 'War on Drugs' conference is already doomed](#) On April 19, the UN is set to hold its first major conference on drugs policies in nearly 20 years. But activists are warning that certain member states are clinging to status quo policies that have failed in the past and will fail in the future.

[Pressure mounts on UN to create positive change at UNGASS](#) Two new reports, released to mark the beginning of the 59th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna this week, have once again laid bare the harms caused by prohibition and the need to radically change the way we look at drug policy in the build up to UNGASS 2016.

[Pacey & MacPherson: Drug policy should focus on harm reduction](#) The flurry of new initiatives introduced by the federal government signals a major philosophical shift on drug policy issues.

[Safe-injection sites don't just protect drug users](#) The importation, sale and use of illicit drugs is complex and there is no easy solution to its elimination. We have tried for years, with little success and we will, and should, keep trying.

[The U.S. wants to adopt a more humane drug policy. Just be careful what you call it.](#) A top drug official says he's open to a "harm reduction" approach to illicit drug use, but wants to find a new term for it.

[Commission wants UN to adopt alternative drug policies](#) The Global Commission on Drug Policy says that the preparation documents for a special session of the UN are relying too heavily on traditional methods of fighting drug trafficking and related crimes.

[Doing drugs differently](#) Does Australia have the courage to changes drug laws in ways that will actually save lives?

More HR news is available on our website at [IN THE NEWS](#)

Advocate Update

In each newsletter we will highlight some of the work undertaken by our Advocates. This month the spotlight is on:

- **Professor Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, from the University of Malaya, who has been named one of the Top 20 most influential Muslim women scientists. She is jointly chairing an international commission of medical experts set up by the Lancet medical journal and Johns Hopkins University in the United States which is calling for global drug decriminalisation, arguing that current policies lead to violence, deaths and the spread of disease, harming health and human rights. The commission comprises doctors, scientists and health and human rights experts from around the world – see <http://press.thelancet.com/DrugsPolicy1.pdf> ;
- **Mr Scott Wilson**, the Director of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc (ADAC) who has been on nearly every major governmental and non-government committee in Australia over the past 20 years;
- **Ms Carrie Fowlie**, the current and founding Executive Officer of Canberra's drug sector peak body, the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA), and the chair of the Implementing Expanded Naloxone Availability in the ACT Committee; and
- **Ms Jann Smith**, the Chief Executive Officer with the Alcohol Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania who has worked in the alcohol and drug sector for over 20 years.

You can read the stories of all our Advocates on our [website](#).



[Adeeba Kamarulzaman](#)



[Scott Wilson](#)



[Carrie Fowle](#)



[Jann Smith](#)



Join Harm Reduction Australia and help achieve more humane, effective and balanced drug policies in Australia and beyond. [Join now](#)



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