

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) Statement on Drug Policy Hysteria

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) is disappointed and appalled at the poor quality of debate regarding current drug policy in Australia.

There has been an ill-informed, and at times bizarre, response to the Greens' announcement that their blanket opposition to legalising any drugs will be replaced with a more evidence-informed and regulatory approach to drugs.

A policy failure of the magnitude we now have with drugs demands discussion, debate and innovative solutions.

Yet the response by many is to try and show that they are the toughest on drugs – in complete ignorance of the evidence.

Here are some facts, of which there are many more, that support a re-think in this area.

Every month we see announcements of record seizures and are told of how we are winning the 'war on drugs'.

Each year we see record numbers of drug arrests, again being told how we are winning the 'war on drugs'.

However, the evidence tells us that individuals actually rate drugs as easy or very easy to obtain, and have done so for many years. In addition, the evidence shows that the price of drugs is decreasing as purity increases.

The lifelong consequences of arresting, charging and in some cases imprisoning tens of thousands of people every year are costly, counterproductive and harmful.

We are also experiencing a level of drug related overdose deaths that is once again escalating at alarming rates.

No-one is suggesting that there is a perfect solution to the complex issues associated with addressing the harms caused by outdated drug policies. However, denouncing a rational and evidence-informed discussion by supporting a continuation of failing policy is inexplicable.

HRA, its members and supporters want the public to understand the reality of what is happening with drug policy today. For that to happen, political and media leaders need to first be informed of the evidence.

Given the extraordinary damage current policies inflict on so many people in our community it should not be too much to ask.