

**Submission No: 57**

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The Secretary of the Committee  
Inquiry into the support of illicit drug use on families  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

21 March 2007

Dear Secretary,

In spite of the worldwide political will in developed nations to eliminate drugs, the reality is that this has failed. Drugs continue in one form or another to be available on the street, and human beings continue to experiment with taking them, frequently to the point of addiction.

We do not condone the use of drugs, but in our experience the 'zero tolerance' policies adopted do not work in the real world. There is plentiful worldwide evidence available to your Committee on all of these aspects and we are not experts or researchers in the field, but instead practical observers of real life.

Drugs continue to be available and people become addicted. Drug use is a criminal activity under our laws and those caught in possession face penalties which can include imprisonment. This does not stop people who are addicted from taking drugs, and indeed the problem is exacerbated in our jails.

The regime of punitive action to drug users does not deter, and from our experience there need to be better solutions. We have been in contact with many families whose lives have been seriously affected because of the use of drugs by family members or close friends, and the universal cry is for help of any kind to address the problem. No matter how many times an addicted person is pleaded with, no matter the effects of their theft of property to support their addiction, or other actions to finance the activity, this is no solution.

Our experience further reinforces that there is desperate need to help people with addiction with programs to assist them to overcome dependence. This means that there is desperate need to help people with addiction with programs to assist them to overcome dependence. This means availability of professional help, including psychological counseling, the availability of methadone or other treatments and, quite simply, somewhere to turn.

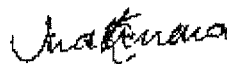
The Kings Cross Injecting Room in Sydney is but one initiative which has saved many lives, in spite of problems incurred in setting it up and misinformation campaigns by opponents. It is widely supported by families whose addicted members need help, understood by Police to play an invaluable role in preventing side street deaths, and especially in being able to help initiate critical rehabilitation programs.

We strongly support all moves which can be made to provide harm minimisation programs and urge you to consider such programs within the framework of future policy determination, setting aside dogma but with real life issues in the forefront of solution considerations

Yours sincerely,



Leo Lawrence



Judith Lawrence