

Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform & Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation

E-Newsletter – August 2008

About the Groups

The Australian Parliamentary Group on Drug Law Reform

The Australian Parliamentary Group on Drug Law Reform (APGDLR) is a cross party group of 100 MP's from our State and Commonwealth parliaments. The group was set up in 1993 after a meeting in Canberra convened by Michael Moore (ACT Assembly) and Ann Symonds (MLC,NSW).

The Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation

The Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation was established in 1994 when a significant number of people in the community endorsed the Charter for Reform that had been developed by the Parliamentary Group.

The Charter for Reform sets out a series of principles that seek to encourage a more rational, tolerant and humanitarian approach to the problems created by drugs and drug use in Australia.

The APGDLR and the ADLRF meet at least once a year to hear from experts in the field, to share information about what is happening in our jurisdictions and to plan future work.

The group also produces occasional newsletters on issues relating drugs in Australia and international developments.

If you would like more information about the Parliamentary Group or the Foundation or would like more information please contact Dr Mal Washer MP 02 6277 2114 or email Mal.Washer.MP@aph.gov.au or Penny Sharpe MLC on 0292302741 or email Penny.Sharpe@parliament.nsw.gov.au

International news:

The process of countries starting to reform their drug laws is underway

Is global drugs policy about to shift?

Dr Alex Wodak, President of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation, writes:

Global drug policy may be about to undergo a major shift -- if the United Nations has the courage and foresight to accept the recommendations of a recent forum it convened.

I recently was one of 300 delegates from non-government organisations from around the world who met in Vienna for a forum of NGOs assisting a review of UN drug policy.

It was an historic meeting because it marked the first time that NGOs have been allowed any involvement in determining the drug policy of the UN system.

The meeting approved a document calling for a major shift in global drug policy. Specific recommendations included:

- the UN to report on the collateral consequences of the current criminal justice-based approach to drugs
- recognition that harm reduction is a necessary and worthwhile response to drug use
- a shift in primary emphasis from interdiction to treatment and prevention
- promotion of alternatives to incarceration
- the provision of development aid to farmers before eradication of coca or opium crops.
- recognition of human rights abuses against people who use drugs
- support for evidence-based drug policy focused on mitigation of short-term and long-term harms
- full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- the inclusion of all affected and stigmatised populations in policy determination

This NGO document will now be considered by meetings of member states, and the review process will be concluded by a high level UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) meeting in March 2009.

It became clear at this meeting that the US is likely to prove a major obstacle to progress on the forum's recommendations. But it also became clear that the US groups taking a hard-line stance against harm minimisation were in a minority -- both within their own country but especially in the international community.

Although 20% of all delegates were from the US, only a minority reflected the hard-line views of the US government. Ms June Sivilli from the US Drug Czar's office appeared to be directing the interventions of these extremist and often mean-spirited US delegates.

The flagrant involvement of a government official in the operation of this NGO conference breached the meeting's rationale. Some US-based anti-drug delegates intervened frequently to obstruct and delay proceedings, reject any suggestion that current drug policies cause any harm, oppose references in the text to 'harm reduction' or participation of people who use drugs in the policy making process.

Eight of the nine reports from regional consultations with NGOs supported harm reduction. The only dissent from this perspective was one of the two North American reports. Probably more than three-quarters of all 300 delegates supported harm reduction.

The processes of this meeting were clearly not perfect. With 18 delegates from Australia and New Zealand, and only one from China and a handful from India, the forum was hardly representative.

Developing countries were severely under represented and non-English speaking delegates had a difficult time. The problems of farmers producing opium and coca, often also victims of current policy, were barely considered. But these negatives were outweighed by the many positives of this process and meeting.

One significant negative from an Australian perspective was the embarrassing intervention by Mr Gary Christian representing Drug Free Australia. He had been involved in the process for many months without making any complaint. Just moments before the closing ceremony was due to begin, Mr Christian began to read a long speech criticising the processes.

A UN review of global drug policy is long overdue. In 1988 the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in New York assembled under the slogan "a drug free world -- we can do it!" Since then, global heroin production has increased by 102% and cocaine production by 20%.

It's time global drug policy moved towards more effective approaches based upon evidence and a harm reduction framework.

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United Nations Secretary General Calls for Greater Focus on the Rights of Prisoners and Drug Users

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, has used the UN's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, June 26th, to remind UN Member States of their human rights obligations while countering the world drug problem.

While calling for continued international co-operation, Mr Ban highlighted the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, taking place throughout the United Nations this year. "I remind all Member States of their responsibility to fully respect the rights of prisoners who are drug dependent or are in custody for drug-related crimes" he said "especially their rights to life and a fair trial". Recognising the discrimination faced by people who use drugs in accessing services, HIV

prevention and other medical assistance programmes the Secretary General called on Member States “to ensure that people who are struggling with drug addiction be given equal access to health and social services.”

“No one should be stigmatized or discriminated against because of their dependence on drugs”, he continued.

At the launch of the independent Commission on AIDS in Asia report earlier this year, Mr. Ban made similar comments in the context of HIV prevention, stating that there “will be no equitable progress so long as some parts of the population are marginalized and denied basic health and human rights”, including “injecting drug users”.

Today, the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) and Transform Drug Policy Foundation have welcomed the Secretary General’s statements. “The Universal Declaration is the bedrock of human rights protection in the United Nations system and must underpin drug law and policy” said IHRA Executive Director, Professor Gerry Stimson, “we are extremely pleased that the Secretary General has focused on the rights of people in prison and people who use drugs, so often overlooked in the global war on drugs. Drug policy must focus as a matter of priority on the right to health of people who use drugs, including HIV and hepatitis C prevention and treatment.”

Danny Kushlick, Director of Transform, said: “We are hopeful that there is a sea change taking place at the international level. This statement follows on from a number of significant statements and developments at the United Nations, which suggest that a greater focus on public health and human rights may be on the cards for international drug policy. There is an increasing recognition at the UN that a punitive enforcement-led approach to drugs is undermining efforts to improve public health, and creating a criminal black market worth £160 billion a year. The Secretary General and the Executive Director of UNODC are to be applauded for being so outspoken in this regard.

In March, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs passed its first ever human rights resolution in its 60 year history. The International Narcotics Control Board, which has in the past said that it ‘will not discuss human rights’, this year said that a lack of respect for human rights can undermine drug control efforts. And the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, has acknowledged that a lack of focus on health and human rights has been an ‘unintended consequence’ of the current approach to drug control. Coinciding with the Secretary-General’s remarks, UN Office on Drugs and Crime Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa will launch the UN’s ‘World Drug Report’ in New York later today.

In July, hundreds of civil society representatives will meet at the UN in Vienna as part of the ‘Beyond 2008’ process to discuss the next ten year strategy for international drug policy. Danny Kushlick concluded: “The last UN ten-year strategy included the slogan ‘A drug free world, we can do it!’ It is clear that the next strategy will be based on goals far less fanciful and far more life enhancing.”

“We hope that the next ten years will see a significant shift in focus at the international level” said Professor Stimson “one that prioritises the health and welfare of those affected by drug related harm over stigmatisation and punishment”.

For your information and interest the following documents provide background information to UN documents:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the Un General Assembly on December 10th 1948. The Un is currently recognising a system-wide celebration of its 60th anniversary with the slogan “Dignity and Justice for All of Us”

<http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/>

"Making drug control 'fit for purpose': Building on the UNGASS decade" a report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, can be seen in full here:

<http://www.tdpf.org.uk/drug%20control%20%27fit%20for%20purpose%27.pdf>

The World Drug Report is the UNODC’s flagship publication aimed at providing an overview of the world drug situation as well as emerging trends. The 2007 report is available online at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html>

BEYOND 2008

In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and led by the Vienna Non Governmental Organisations Committee on Narcotic Drugs 300 NGO delegates, from all regions of the world, met to debate and construct a consensus on policy recommendations and on mechanisms for NGOs and the government to work together. This consensus, in the form of a Declaration and Resolutions, will be tabled at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the UNODC as they prepare for the 1998 - 2008 UNGASS review. The Declaration and Resolutions can be found through this link:

[http://www.vngoc.org/images/uploads/file/BEYOND%202008%20DECLARATION%20AND%20RESOLUTIONS%20FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.vngoc.org/images/uploads/file/BEYOND%202008%20DECLARATION%20AND%20RESOLUTIONS%20FINAL(1).pdf)

10 YEARS OF TNI DRUGS AND DEMOCRACY PROGRAMME 1998 - 2008

TNI has been involved in international drugs policy work since the 1998 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS). This report summarises the lessons of 10 years of work in this field, emphasising drug controls that respect human rights: the rights of farmers caught in the illicit economy to a life in dignity; decriminalisation of drug use; and the promotion of harm reduction approaches where they are proven to save lives.

English: <http://www.tni.org/reports/drugs/10years.pdf>
Spanish: <http://www.tni.org/reports/drugs/10anos.pdf>

FROM THE UK (16/7/08)

UK Youth Strongest Supporters of Drug Legalisation in Europe

Transform Drug Policy Foundation (TDPF) today welcomed the European Commission's (EC) decision to start using its regular Eurobarometer opinion poll "Young people and drugs" to assess public support for replacing drugs prohibition with state regulated supply.

Transform's Head of Policy Danny Kushlick said; "*We congratulate the EC for recognising that other options than the failed war on drugs are being proposed, and for asking the public about them. This poll shows that many people support new approaches, and it is likely many more at least want them properly explored.*

In light of this, the UK Government must stop refusing to assess the costs and benefits of current and alternative ways to combat drug problems, allowing future policy to be based on evidence, not 'tough on drugs' posturing that costs lives and wrecks communities. Such an audit would show replacing drugs prohibition with strict control and regulation would cut crime, reduce harm to users, and save billions of pounds." added Kushlick.

Previous versions of the survey on attitudes to drugs amongst EU citizens aged 15-24 were carried out in 2002 and 2004. Only the most recent version in May 2008 asked:

- Whether legalising drugs would be one of the most effective ways for public authorities to combat drug problems.
- Whether heroin, cocaine, ecstasy or cannabis should continue to be banned, or their sale and consumption regulated instead.

The British, Irish and Dutch most favoured the legalisation of drugs as a way of dealing with drug related problems in society. In the UK and Ireland 22 per cent thought it would be either the most effective, or the second most effective way, followed by the Dutch on 21 per cent.

In the UK and Spain 40 per cent of young people thought the sale and consumption of cannabis should be regulated rather than banned, behind the Netherlands (52 per cent) and the Czech Republic (53 per cent).

Averaged across all 27 EU countries, those polled much preferred so-called "soft" measures for dealing with drug-users e.g. information and prevention campaigns (47 per cent) or the treatment and rehabilitation of users (33 per cent), as opposed to tough measures (23 per cent).

Contact: Danny Kushlick, Head of Policy danny@tdpf.org.uk

1. For a full copy of Flash Eurobarometer No 233 –Young People and Drugs 2008 visit http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_233_en.pdf. The poll was requested by the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice, Liberty and Security.
2. In its review of UK drug policy of 2002 the UK Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee (including David Cameron MP) recommended: "That the Government initiates a discussion within the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of alternative ways - including the possibility of legalisation and regulation - to tackle the global drugs dilemma."
3. Transform Drug Policy Foundation (TDPF) is the UK's leading think tank on drug policy reform

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www.tdpf.org.uk

£833,000: The real cost to the nation of a drug addict revealed

(By Matthew Hickley 14/6/2008)

A drug addict will cost the nation an astonishing £833,000 in their lifetime. This includes the burden they place on the Health Service and the criminal justice system, as well as their loss of earnings and productivity and the cost of putting any children into care.

It is equivalent to almost £5,000 out of the pockets of every man, woman and child in Britain.

The figures, released in a Whitehall study, show that Britain's 350,000 drug addicts will cost the nation £291billion. Successfully weaning one 21-year-old male addict off drugs would save the country £730,000, the study authors claim. Male drug addicts cost an average of £827,000. The figure for women is £859,000 because this includes the cost of children being taken into care. The extraordinary figures reveal how the damage caused by drug abuse spreads far beyond the individual user, increasing the burden on a range of public services and chipping away at Britain's economic strength.

The study by consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers, commissioned by Justice Secretary Jack Straw, warns that the £833,000 figure is likely to be too low due to 'conservative' estimates used. The PWC report cites recent research putting the number of 'problem drug users' at 350,000, and says most are addicted to heroin or cocaine - particularly crack cocaine.

The report, which was ordered to come up with solutions to drugs in jail, warns that prisons without narcotics are an unrealistic goal and raises some radical potential solutions. They include introducing needle-exchange programmes for prisons, and even allowing 'retoxification' for

hardcore heroin users about to leave jail.

This allows them to take drugs in custody to increase their tolerance because so many die from overdoses just after being released.

But the consultants warn ministers that there is scant evidence some treatment schemes in prison have any effect. Around half of the 135,000 inmates who pass through jails in England and Wales each year are thought to be misusing drugs, the report states, adding: 'The creation of drug-free prisons is an expensive option and was not considered to be practical in the current resource climate.'

See full report (especially Appendix 3) at

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/announcement130608a.htm>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1026375/833-000-The-real-cost-nation-drug-addict-revealed.html>

A new report "**TACKLING DRUG MARKETS AND DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS IN THE UK: A review of the recent literature**"

is available at: <http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/Publications.shtml>

ARGENTINA

On Tuesday 29 July, President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, spoke in favor of reforming Argentine drug law in order to decriminalize drug possession for personal use.

Just as anticipated, in the V National Conference on Drug Policies (<http://www.intercambios.org.ar/english/marco.htm>) and at the CND meeting last March, the Minister of Justice, Security and Human Rights, Anibal Fernández conducted a drug reform project and raised the issue of the "complete failure" of punishing drug users.

This week the Argentinean government reaffirmed its support of decriminalization of the possession of drugs for personal use.

On Tue 29, the Ministry of Justice launched a national survey in an event with the President and most of her Ministers in attendance. Cristina said: "It is important that we focus our efforts to help drug users; I don't like people who condemn them, the only one who should be prosecuted is the one who sells drugs".

Minister Fernández also referred to human rights and harm reduction policy saying that he proposed that this policy be included in the national drug policy.

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UNITED STATES

Presidential Candidate Barak Obama talks to *Rolling Stone*

<http://transform-drugs.blogspot.com/2008/07/rolling-stone-obama-on-ending-drug-war.html>

RollingStone: The War on Drugs has cost taxpayers \$500 billion since 1973. Nearly 500,000 people are behind bars on drug charges today, yet drugs are as available as ever. Do you plan to continue the War on Drugs, or will you make some significant change in course?

Obama: "Anybody who sees the devastating impact of the drug trade in the inner cities, or the methamphetamine trade in rural communities, knows that this is a huge problem. I believe in shifting the paradigm, shifting the model, so that we focus more on a public-health approach. I can say this as an ex-smoker: We've made enormous progress in making smoking socially unacceptable. You think about auto safety and the huge success we've had in getting people to fasten their seat belts.

The point is that if we're putting more money into education, into treatment, into prevention and reducing the demand side, then the ways that we operate on the criminal side can shift. I would start with nonviolent, first-time drug offenders. The notion that we are imposing felonies on them or sending them to prison, where they are getting advanced degrees in criminality, instead of thinking about ways like drug courts that can get them back on track in their lives - it's expensive, it's counterproductive, and it doesn't make sense."

FRANCE

PRIORITIES OF THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY ON DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION

The priorities of the French Presidency of the EU have been published and the fight against drugs and drug addiction has been expressly included as a constant objective essential to the protection of citizens. The French presidency will facilitate the negotiation of the new EU action plan against drugs for 2009 - 2012 and prepare EU positions and strategy for the CND. There are hopes to coordinate national positions so that Europe can speak with one voice on the international stage and co-operate more effectively with the third world. The profound objective is to be more effective, that is to obtain a real and measurable impact on the drugs situation in member states and to communicate strategies better so that citizens know and understand them. A busy calendar of events has been prepared by the French Presidency to this end.

http://www.drogues.gouv.fr/IMG/doc/PFUE_les_priorites_drogues.doc

<http://www.drogues.gouv.fr/IMG/doc/PFUECalendrier.doc>

An unofficial translation of the above documents has been prepared by IDPC:

http://www.idpc.info/php-bin/documents/PFUE_July08_EN.pdf

INDONESIA

INDONESIAN JANGKAR REPORT

http://www.idpc.info/php-bin/documents/Jangkar_2008_IDUandHumanRightsinIndonesia_IND_EN.pdf

This is the report of Jangkar (the National Action Network for Drug Harm Reduction in Indonesia) and the Open Society Institute. The report is one of the first attempts to assess and depict violation of drug users' human rights in Indonesia. Since the document is the pdf version of a printed bilingual publication in Indonesian and English, the English version should be read from back to front.

http://www.idpc.info/php-bin/documents/Jangkar_2008_IDUandHumanRightsinIndonesia_IND_EN.pdf

PETITION TO FREE IRANIAN HARM REDUCTION DOCTORS

Paola Barahona, MPH, a Global Health Policy Associate with Physicians for Human Rights, Washington, is reaching out to friends, family, and colleagues and asking them to consider signing the attached petition to the Government of Iran on behalf of Drs. Kamiar Alaei and Arash Alaei, physician brothers who have been working on HIV and drug use in Iran for many years. They have been detained without any charges by Iranian security forces since late June. There is concern that their detainment may be related to their harm reduction work and leadership. The petition calls on the government of Iran to either charge or immediately release them. Please consider signing the petition online at http://actnow-phr.org/campaign/iran_free_the_docs and let Paula know if you would like her to keep you informed of progress in the case by emailing: pbarahona@phrusa.org

CANADA

The minority Federal Conservative government in Canada is strongly opposed to the SIF (aka MSIC) in Vancouver

Now the Quebec government has been making noises about starting a SIF in Montreal, Quebec

The Federal Conservatives need to win Quebec to become a majority government at the next elections

So they have said they will continue to oppose the Vancouver SIF but may have a different attitude to one in Montreal

AUSTRALIAN NEWS:

CURRENT AUSTRALIAN ISSUES:

Methadone treatment 'too expensive' for addicts

ABC: Posted Tue Jun 24, 2008 9:00am AEST

A new report has found the cost of methadone programs is too high for most heroin addicts.

The Federal Government funds methadone treatment, but most pharmacies charge a \$60 dispensing fee.

The RMIT University study found the fee was a barrier for many heroin users wanting to kick the habit.

Report author Dr James Rowe says the Government subsidises dispensing fees for most other medications.

"Those medications are supplied, the cost is subsidised and the dispensing fee is completely subsidised," he said.

"So it's just those on opiate maintenance programs who have to pay a dispensing fee, and there is no real rational reason for that to be the case.

"It's basically a human rights argument."

Dr Rowe says the cost of the unsubsidised methadone forces many people back on to heroin.

"They get kicked off the program, they still have a dependency," he said.

"It can't be met by legal means, so they end up back on heroin, with all the costs that that entails.

"The crime that's involved, the sex work that's involved, the overdose, the loss of a family member, the costs are quite incredible."

Dr Rowe can be contacted at James.rowe@rmit.edu.au

The link below takes internet users to the Salvation Army press release that accompanied the launch of the report. At the bottom of the release, there is a link to download the report.

http://202.168.36.137/scripts/nc.dll?SALV.2884112:NEWSRELEASE:443130854:pc=PC_62401

Shadow Attorneys-General and Police Ministers agree to consider National Illicit Drug Code (30/7/08)

Shadow Attorneys-General and Shadow Police Ministers from around Australia meeting in Canberra today agreed in-principle to consider a proposal for a national uniform illicit drug code.

Agreement was reached during discussion of the highly disparate illicit drug laws of Australia's State and Territory Labor Governments.

Today's in-principle agreement will initially take the form of a discussion paper to be delivered in the next few months, which will be formally considered by the various State and Territory Oppositions.

The Shadow Attorneys-General and Shadow Police Ministers also used the meeting to discuss the various policy failures of State Labor Governments.

Items on the agenda included discussion on a proposed Bill of Rights, Illicit Drugs, the process for judicial appointments, border protection, same sex legislation, organised crime, outlaw bikie gangs and evidence law reform including double jeopardy.

Building a closer relationship between Shadow Attorneys-General and Shadow Police Ministers will mean a more cooperative and integrated approach when it comes to policy development.

The meeting today will help inform future policy development in the lead up to state and federal elections.

PRESS RELEASE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR DRUG LAW REFORM AGM

Following the AGM of the Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform on 25th June 2008 in Parliament House, Canberra the following Press Release was provided to the media

The Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform held its Annual General Meeting today in Parliament House, Canberra.

The bi-partisan Group hopes to encourage an inquiry by the Productivity Commission or the Centre for Independent Studies into the real economic costs of policing the use of illicit drugs.

Guest speaker Dr Alex Wodak, Director of the Alcohol and Drug Service at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, said health and education programs were much more economically effective than policing when it came to addressing drug use.

He said the scientific debate was well and truly over in relation to the wide-ranging benefits of harm minimisation, including needle exchange and methadone programs, but the political debate had some catching up to do.

Outlining current research and new advances in programs around the world, Dr Wodak revealed that harm minimisation was now the accepted standard for the vast majority of nations, as well as key United Nations' agencies such as WHO and UNICEF.

Dr Wodak said harm minimisation programs were –

- effective;
- safe; and,
- cost-effective

Membership of the Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform is comprised of current and former Senators and Federal and State MPs of all parties.

If you require further information please contact Group co-chairs Mal Washer (6277 2114) or Julia Irwin (6277 4300.).

Job Opportunity: IDPC Alert - August 2008

The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) is a global network of NGOs and professional networks that specialise in issues related to illegal drug production and use. The Consortium aims to promote objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at national and international level, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective in reducing drug-related harm. It disseminates the reports of its member organisations about particular drug-related matters, and offers expert consultancy services to policymakers and officials around the world.

JOB OPPORTUNITY - IDPC COORDINATOR REQUIRED

GLOBAL DRUG POLICY ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY

The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) (www.idpc.info) is a global network of NGOs and professional networks that specialise in issues related to illegal drug use. It aims to promote objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at national and international level, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective in reducing drug-related harm. In the two years of its existence, the IDPC has established itself as a credible and respected source of policy analysis and advice for many policy makers in national governments and international agencies. We are now looking to build on this foundation to broaden our analytical and advocacy activities. Release (<http://www.release.org.uk/>) manages the work of the IDPC and is looking to appoint a committed and highly professional individual to coordinate its activities. The successful candidate will combine a sound administrative and organisational sense, with good advocacy skills, and an ability to operate at a high level of international affairs. This position is London based, however, exceptional candidates based elsewhere will be considered. The salary range is £30-40k.

If you are interested in applying for this post, please email Geni Horwood at geni@release.org.uk for:

1. Information letter
2. Person Specification
3. Job Description
4. IDPC work plan and membership list

Completed applications should be submitted by 5th September 2008. Interviews will be held in London on 25th and 26th September.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

RELEASE CONFERENCE

"Drugs, Race and Discrimination" is the theme of the upcoming 2008 Release Conference to be held in London on 18th September 2008. This unique event will focus on discrimination faced by drug users around the world. By highlighting the issues confronting people from an already marginalised background whose drug use leaves them open to further prejudice, this conference will tackle some of the most complex and interesting issues in drug policy today. International speakers presenting original material will include: Deborah Small (Break the Chains); Damon Barret (IHRA); Chris Huhne MP and King Downing (ACLU). Tickets are available on a first come first service basis by following the booking link on the conference programme available here:

http://releaseorgu.eweb101.discountasp.net/latest_conference.html

Dr Mal Washer MP (02 6277 2114) and Julia Irwin MP (02 6277 4300)
Parliament House Canberra – Co-Chairs, **Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform**