

# TRANSFORM

## DRUG POLICY FOUNDATION

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### EMBARGOED Media Release

**Under embargo until Australian Launch and Media Conference:**

**NSW Parliament House Press Room**

**11:00 hrs EST Monday 15 November 2009**

## Landmark book shows how to regulate drugs

Transform Drug Policy Foundation's internationally groundbreaking book *After the War on Drugs: Blueprint for Regulation* is being launched in England, the US, mainland Europe, Central and South Americas, Australia and Asia. The Australian launch has been organised under the auspices of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation.

Greens MLC Ian Cohen, who is the sponsor of the Australian launch, said: "There is growing recognition in many countries that the global prohibition of drugs has not only been a failure, but has had very severe adverse effects. A major barrier to drug law reform has been fear of the unknown – what would a post-prohibition regime look like?"

Cohen said of the new publication "For the first time anywhere, *Blueprint* provides a detailed roadmap. It shows how to regulate all currently prohibited drugs by proposing specific models of regulation for each type of drug, coupled with the principles and rationale for doing so."

Launching the book at NSW's Parliament House today, well-known broadcaster and writer, Phillip Adams said: "Like it or not, drugs are here to stay. We have a choice - either criminals control drugs, or governments do."

Adams added "by the cautious implementation of a legally regulated regime, we can control products, prices, vendors, outlets, availability and use a range of regulatory models, depending on the nature of the drug and evidence of what works. Under prohibition we have no controls whatsoever". "The consequences of global drug prohibition have been disastrous", he said.

"This is not a radical book" Adams noted. "It takes an evidence-based approach to reducing drug-related harms, moving away from fear-based moral judgments that have previously dominated drug policy. No-one proposes or supports 'free-for-all' arrangements for drugs. *Blueprint* demonstrates that legally regulating drugs is not a step into the unknown, but a tried and tested approach. These include doctors' prescriptions, pharmacy sales, licensed premises and off-license sales."

Also launching *Blueprint* in Sydney today, former Liberal Party Senator and Federal Minister and former Chancellor of the ANU, Professor Peter Baume said "Criminalising drugs has led to a dramatic increase in drug-related harms. Controlling and regulating their production and distribution would go a long way towards reducing those harms. A range of Latin American governments have already moved, or are moving, towards decriminalisation drug possession and are shifting to a public health model."

Professor Baume added "We need comprehensive 'Impact Assessments' to count the costs and benefits of prohibition, and compare them with legally regulated control. At the least, this will enable government and taxpayers to assess how well scarce resources are being spent. At best, it will trigger a genuine debate on alternatives to the futile war on drugs, leading to the replacement of prohibition with an effective, just and humane system of legal regulation. It will not be perfect but it is the 'least-worst' option. In the case of some drugs, it is a matter of re-legalisation rather than legalisation."

*Blueprint* envisages a world where non-medical drug supply and use is treated with compassion, pragmatism and evidence-based interventions focused on improving public health.

Professor Baume explained "Much of what we call the drug problem is caused by the fact that prohibition gifts the market to criminals. Government regulation and control would help stabilise transit and producer countries, significantly reduce property crime and the prison population, improve the wellbeing of drug users and their families, protect young people and vulnerable communities and save billions of pounds that could be spent on dealing with the root causes of problematic drug use."

## **ENDS**

**For embargoed copies of the book and executive summary or for more information contact:**

**Ms Leah McLeod 02 9361 8014 or 0406 422 267**

### **Transform Drug Policy Foundation**

Transform Drug Policy Foundation is the UK's leading organization advocating alternatives to the drug war. Transform is a charitable think tank that seeks to draw public attention to the fact that drug prohibition itself is the major cause of drug-related harm to individuals, communities and nations, and should be replaced by effective, just and humane government control and regulation.

Transform has emerged in response to the increasingly apparent failings of current UK and international drug policy. As illegal drug use and the problems associated with illegal drug markets have continued to grow, Transform is providing new thinking on alternatives to the current enforcement-oriented regime of prohibition.

Transform is seeking to reform policies that have attempted to control drug use through criminal justice enforcement, a failed approach that has been enormously destructive. Rather than eliminating drugs from society, drug prohibition has served only to criminalise millions of users and to create lucrative and dangerous illegal markets controlled by organised criminals.

### **Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation (ADLRF)**

The Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation (ADLRF) is an incorporated non-profit organisation which promotes open debate on drug policy and provides information on alternatives to reduce the harm, social costs and personal tragedies caused by illicit drug use.