

Parliamentary speech of the Honorable Dennis Hood, Government of South Australia, Australia, Wednesday 5th September, 2018

[Parliament House, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA 5000](#)

DRUG FREE AUSTRALIA

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I rise to speak on the important work of Drug Free Australia, which was established in 2004 as the peak body for organisations and family associations around Australia that seek the prevention of illicit drug use and expansion of its availability. Drug Free Australia's vision is to ensure communities, including members of parliament, are well informed about the harms of drug use and are empowered with knowledge to assist in effective policy information.

Indeed, many members in this place may have received emails from Drug Free Australia from time to time, which I personally have found to be very helpful and quite informative, given I hold views that are largely in accordance with their own, in particular on how we should treat the issues of trafficking, sale and manufacturing of illicit substances.

Members may not be aware that the chairman of Drug Free Australia is Major Brian Watters, who was actually the chair of former prime minister John Howard's Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), which served as his drug advisory from 1996 through to 2007. During this particular period, I am informed that the national cannabis use was halved, amphetamine use was cut by 40 per cent and heroin use decreased by 75 per cent. Major Watters was also Australia's representative to the United Nations' International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) throughout most of these years, which is an impressive accolade for one.

As part of their work, and in recognition that legislators require reliable, accurate and up-to-date information with regard to the prevalence of substance abuse in our nation, Drug Free Australia provides briefs to parliamentarians whenever specific issues call for evidence-based clarity. Part of the organisation's work with members of the federal parliament and state parliaments is undertaken through its participation in parliamentary inquiries, where its submissions are often cited at the reporting stage.

Drug Free Australia's research director calls upon 24 fellows, a group of epidemiologists, addiction medicine specialists, other medicos, PhD psychologists and social researchers to guide its public statements. Over recent years, Drug Free Australia has had extensive input into Australia's drug legalisation debate promoted by Australia21 via its involvement in community forums and discussions on television, radio and other media outlets.

In order to fulfil its mandate, Drug Free Australia runs drug prevention education programs in schools and provides guest speakers for other community groups, service clubs and special interest groups that have an interest in the topic.

It also seeks to keep the public informed on drug statistics and prevention initiatives via press releases to media outlets and mailouts to key stakeholders. In South Australia, Drug Free Australia commenced surveying a cross-section of schools in the public, independent and Catholic sectors. The results indicated that, whilst some schools did offer drug education programs within their health or physical education classes, a majority did not prioritise the topic due to already crowded curricula.

I am informed most presenters are happy to receive a gold coin donation for their time and effort to inform our youth of the dangers of illicit drug use when they go out and conduct these seminars, and I certainly commend them for their important work in ensuring they are well equipped to make wise decisions. I would encourage members in the other place to promote the program supported by Drug Free Australia to schools within their electorates.

I am pleased that Drug Free Australia has advised that the Marshall Liberal government's policies concerning the prevention and reduction of drug use and recovery-based treatment and rehabilitation programs closely aligns with its own position. It has indicated that its representatives are always available to members of parliament for consultation, and I look forward to working further with the organisation in the best interests of our state.