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From: Alice Torpy <wordpress@wp.greens.org.au>
Sent: Monday, 13 March 2017 8:55 AM
To: LRRCS
Subject: We Can't Stop Young People From Using Drugs, But We Can Stop Them From Dying Because Of It

RE: INQUIRY INTO DRUG LAW REFORM

We Can't Stop Young People From Using Drugs, But We Can Stop Them From Dying Because Of It

Last month, more than 20 young people were hospitalized, many in a critical condition, for drug-overdoses at the Electric Parade Dance Party in Melbourne. The month before that, a toxic batch of ecstasy was to blame for up to 20 overdoses around Chapel Street venues; three of these people ended up dead. At the Stereosonic Music Festival in 2015, Sylvia Choi, a young pharmacist, died after consuming a contaminated ecstasy tablet.

Young Australians take drugs. In fact, Australians are the leading consumers of ecstasy worldwide. As a young person who goes to music festivals and nightclubs, I can vouch for the fact that the drug use among my peers is not slowing down. Why would it? An ecstasy tablet is cheaper than alcohol and lasts hours longer. As a training doctor who spends time in the Emergency Department, I can also vouch for how tragic it is when someone my age is brought to hospital fighting for their life because they didn't know the strength of the drugs they were taking or what it was contaminated with.

It is clear that the Government's current strategy to prevent the harm associated with drug use is not working. Teaching kids at school that drugs are bad is not going to protect the young adult against the influence of peer pressure. Having sniffer dogs at festivals is not deterring anyone; if anything, it is doing more harm than good when people get scared and take everything they've got, inevitably leading to overdoses and disasters.

Harm reduction advocates continually tell us that these deaths are preventable and the technology to prevent them is already available - why is the government still pushing for a principle-based deterrence approach at the cost of so many young lives?

-- Alice Torpy


I'm happy for my submission and details to be made public.