



FDS Insight Newsletter May - June 2005

From The Depths To The Heights

Peter Manning, SMH (17/5/05)

Bob Bellear, Judge, 1944-2005

Australia is called a classless society. But Bob Bellear, who has died at 60, did what few other Australians have done: he rose from the very bottom rung to the very top. Not just from working-class and rural origins but from Aboriginal deprivation to become Australia's first indigenous judge.

Raised in the far North Coast town of Billinudgel, near Mullumbimby, he was the grandson of a Vanuatu sugar-cutting slave and an Aboriginal woman from the Noonuccal people of Stradbroke Island. One of nine children, he knew poverty, hunger and a widespread culture of alcoholism as he grew to manhood. He told an interviewer in 1978: 'Drunkenness was our only refuge. But when you emerged from the haze of drunkenness, there was always the harsh reality of racism to face.' He left school early, he said, and 'I couldn't even get a job as a bank teller, attitudes being what they were then.'

Bellear joined the navy.

He learned mechanical engineering and clearance diving, and loved his time at sea. He became a champion rugby player for the navy. Tall and lean, he was an outstanding and talented centre. In the navy he met his wife and life partner Kaye Williams, the daughter of a Ballarat trade unionist. At the time, she was going out with one of Bellear's shipmates and was in the process of moving house from Bondi to Kings Cross. Bellear helped her move! in every sense of the word. Within six weeks the couple had fallen in love and married. They became inseparable and a devastating combination. Kaye saw in Bellear the qualities of a natural leader: a man of charm, conviction, humanity, common sense, humour and ambition.

Bellear became the first Aborigine to rise to the level of petty officer in the navy. By the time he left in 1968, he was a qualified diver, bricklayer, furnace lagger, and fitter and turner. He gained jobs at the Clyde oil refinery and elsewhere on the strength of his trade skills. He was already a man on the march.

But this was also the time in Sydney of rising Aboriginal consciousness about civil rights. The use of the hated Summary Offences Act on Aboriginal people in Redfern became a kind of police sport. Bellear watched with horror as friends suffered not for being criminal but for being black. The overt racism of the police actions every Friday and Saturday night appalled him.

The former attorney-general who welcomed Bellear to the bench, Jeff Shaw, said at the time: 'It

was easy for police to arrest Aboriginal people. They had a formula. It was the trifecta, 'unseemly words', 'resist arrest' and 'assault police'. Seeing this injustice repeated week after week hit hard, and there was no way that Bob Bellear was going to sit back and watch it happening.'

One evening in 1972, Kaye and Bellear were sitting in the Clifton Hotel, Redfern, when the paddy wagons dragged away another clutch of local blacks. Together they decided he would study law.

Bellear went to Sydney Technical College to finish his high school studies, getting his HSC in 1973. The next year he joined the University of NSW law school. He gained his degree in 1978 and was admitted to the bar the next year. In less than 10 years from taking that decision at the Clifton Hotel, he had become a barrister.

Bellear founded the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern in 1972, was a director of the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service through most of the 1970s, and was a director and chairman of Tranby College. He was a key South Sydney community activist and a close adviser to the remarkable Father Ted Kennedy of St Vincent's Church, Redfern. He was also on myriad Labor committees advising on Aboriginal policy.

In the 1980s there was no stopping this man of quiet determination, affable humour and unaffected friendliness. He represented Aboriginal people (and whites) in a wide range of courts. The main emphasis of his practice, however, was criminal trials, instructed by the Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid Commission or private practitioners. He was constantly working on the side of the poor. He also successfully represented traditional owners in three important land claims, and was appointed as counsel assisting to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1987.

Meanwhile, he was a committee member of the Redfern All Blacks rugby league club and patron of the Moree Boomerang Football Club.

In 1990 he won the University of NSW Alumni Award and in 1993 Macquarie University awarded him an honorary doctor of laws in recognition of his services to law, the community and the Aboriginal people. By then he had been appointed public defender in NSW and could be found at the Matthew Talbot Hostel dispensing free legal advice to the homeless in his spare time.

In 1996, he became the first Aborigine to be appointed a judge. From the benches of District Courts around NSW, Bellear worked for eight years bringing fair and compassionate justice to those before him.

He also worked without stint for young Aboriginal people thinking of studying law. He was a mentor to young black lawyers and law students, and encouraged Aboriginal high school students to join him in his court. He opened the court to national indigenous legal studies students from Tranby. He was a strong supporter of the construction union, and was patron of the Construction Industry Drug and Alcohol Foundation.

He had a special place in his heart for his son Malu, who died young. At his appointment as a judge in 1996, Bellear said: 'My son Malu, for all his short life, loved me unconditionally and taught me the value of compassion and courage. He will be with me for the entire journey both on and off the bench.'

When Bellear's son, Kali, had a boy last year, he was named Tanna Jamarra Bellear!Tanna for his grandfather's ancestral Vanuatu home and Jamarra for kangaroo (the same meaning as Malu). And when Bellear died in his bed, wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt, Kaye's last words were to invite him to rejoin his beloved Malu.

Bellear has been a role model for his people, a source of enormous pride and joy to his family, especially his wife, and a beacon of hope in dark times for all those who believe in Aboriginal rights and justice. He wore his extraordinary achievements with great humility. A great friend, an easy mate, he never lost his ordinary touch. He will remain strong in the hearts of all he touched.

He is survived by Kaye, his children, Joanne and Kali, and four grand-children.

Editor's Note: Along with Elly and Evan, I was privileged to attend the State Funeral of Bob Bellear. Bob and Kaye are long standing members of FDS and they were regular attendees of our Remembrance Ceremony where they celebrated the life of their son Malu.

Bob was a giant of a man in so many ways!his achievements were enormous and he will leave a huge gap, which will probably never be filled adequately. It was terrific that the funeral focussed on his very human characteristics as well as his achievements in the legal and social arenas. For Kaye and his children the loss is enormous and our thoughts are with them. TT

To My Boyfriend

I really love my boyfriend, at school he's in my class,

It's so hard not to love him, though his blood is made of grass.

He goes down every lunchtime, to the brook with all his mates,

I don't mind that he goes down there, it's just the stuff he takes.

First it makes him happy, then it makes him bad,

Then afterwards when I'm with him, he'll shout 'till I'm sad.

My friends say I should dump him, they say he's wrong upstairs,

But it's not him it's what he smokes which makes him fall off chairs.

He thinks that I am stupid and I don't know what he does,

But he can't see the consequences and what it does to us.

I really wish he'd stop it, he never smoked before,

I guess the grass keeps holding him and grabbing with its claw.

When we first met he was so good at football in the park,

But now I never see him when he goes out after dark,

At school I don't see him much although he's in my class,

His priorities are weed then booze then mates then me who's last.

Maybe I should dump him and do what my friends say,

But if I say I'm going to, I'll do it another day.

Why can't things just go back to how it used to be,

No weed, no booze, no cigarettes, just his friends and me.

He promises it's just for fun, nothing serious just yet,

But what does he call serious, how plastered can he get?

Maybe one day when we've left school, we can turn over a new leaf,

That is of course if he is not a junkie and a thief.

When we first met he was so nice, long letters he would send,

But here we are right here and now our relationship must end.

So I'm sorry to my boyfriend you have to know the score,

You can quit or we are finished I can't take this anymore.

Insights Out

Thanks once again to the many people who have enquired about my health and I am pleased to say that I am physically strong and feeling well.

An unexpected side effect has been a bout of severe depression!in many ways worse than when Damien died. It has given me some insight, of course, into the experience of those who suffer this debilitating illness!including drug and alcohol users for whom depression is an ongoing and devastating part of their lives. I am receiving help for my condition and am hoping it will be a temporary struggle.

The recent Four Corners program on cannabis really stirred up debate and interest, as well as quite a lot of anxiety and concern among callers to our Helpline. I thought the case studies reflected the

problems well of those we know who are devastated by the severe problems that cannabis causes in small numbers of users.

The coalface workers featured were inspiring in their commitment to helping those severely affected. I thought the `academic and experts' featured were not very helpful and surprisingly short on evidence!mostly using opinion and guesswork to make their points.

I also thought the ABC was surprisingly biased in the presentation, which unfortunately contributed to a lot of anxiety created among parents of teenagers.

As a result of the program, we have decided to dedicate the majority of the next FDS Insight magazine to cannabis. We will aim to focus on the reality of cannabis use and give information that is helpful to families of cannabis users, including those with severe problems, as well as the majority who are affected less severely. It should be very informative and helpful.

Finally, I want to give a plug for a major FDS event upcoming up in Drug Action Week on Wednesday 22 June at Paddington Town Hall. We want to see as many of you as possible attend this important expo and forum. The day will include a special session on Drugs and Teenagers, as well as presentations from experts on current drug trends.

The final session will feature a family panel discussing the complexity of problems that affect them. Information booths and displays will be open throughout the day and a wealth of information will be available. Please come and be part of this important event.

Best wishes!Tony T

Letter To Family And Friends (Pt 2)

Adapted by Tony Trimmingham

Understanding The User And The Difficulties Of Change

Think about yourself for a moment. You may never have had a problem with drugs or alcohol. But maybe you've had a health problem such as high blood pressure. Your doctor gave you strict instructions about what to do to prevent stroke or heart attack. Get more exercise. Cut way back on you salt intake. Take the medications prescribed. You might respond to this medical advice in a couple of different ways. At first you are afraid, and you quickly form a determination to control the disease. You might go home and throw away all the peanuts and potato chips and dust off the exercise bike. You exercise everyday. You take your pills. Then you go to a barbecue and the sausages smell so good. A little salt won't make that big a difference you say. Or your feet start to hurt, and the bike pedals feel so hard. Better not work out for a while. Or you don't have the energy that you used to and your sex life isn't so good. Must be the damn pills. You may fight the urge to slack off and win for a while but more likely you will wage many battles over a long time until you make changes you can stick with. Sometimes these changes are a less-than-ideal compromise between doctor's orders and your not-so-perfect self. Your friends will understand, because they do the same thing. One friend has diabetes and never checks her blood sugar, relying instead on some intuitive sense of when the levels are too high, at which point she cuts back on carbohydrates. She says that life is too short to worry all the time. Another friend spends more than he earns and has a huge credit card debt. He vows to leave the card at home when he goes out, but if there is a sale on . . . well, that's different, right?

This is how life works. You identify a problem and try to deal with it in your own way, without hard and fast rules. You make compromises with reality. You are sometimes more and sometimes less honest with yourself about how you're doing. You are more likely to make a positive change if you have some control over how you do it and if you do, it tends to be a way that's manageable for you. That's harm reduction. It's the same for problems with alcohol and other drugs as it is for any other problem that necessitates a behaviour change.

Naturally, this puts you in a difficult position. On the one hand, how can you allow the person you are concerned about to be in charge of his or her life when things are clearly out of control? On the other hand, you're not really in charge of anyone but yourself anyway. There are a few things about drug use that you might want to consider while you're trying to address the harm that's being produced in your life. Understanding the perspective of the person with the drug problem can help you formulate your own plans.

It's Normal To Want To Alter Your Consciousness

Some of us like to listen to a certain kind of music and feel 'swept away' by it. Children twirl around in circles to make themselves dizzy, and then fall to the ground giggling. Many of us fix huge amounts of food for holidays and celebrations and eat until we're groggy. Some people fast and meditate to have visions. And people try illegal drugs and legal ones (alcohols and cigarettes and caffeine) for the same reasons: they want to see how it feels to feel different, to alter their usual state of mind. This is normal behaviour. And it has become an adolescent rite of passage for the majority of young people in Australia. Most of them come through this experimental phase just fine. Some suffer serious harm along the way. A few die. It's important to keep in mind, especially for young people that drug use is not the same as drug abuse. And when we try to understand the internal workings of a person with an addiction, it's useful to remember that at least some of what's driving their behaviour is the same thing that moves all of us, curiosity.

People use drugs for reasons. Sometimes those reasons are the desire to participate in a rite of passage. Sometime it's to dull the pain of the past or deal with the stress of the present.

Let us not forget the heavy reliance in Australia on medication to treat all manner of ailments. Antihistamines, cough suppressants, antibiotics, diet supplements and stimulants for weight loss, weight gain or performance enhancement are used liberally. We no longer want to endure simple colds, flu, allergies, or sore muscles. Goodness knows we don't want to tolerate them or ride them out. We want to eradicate them. Some of us take antidepressants or sleeping pills at the first sign of a bad mood or a bad night's sleep (whereas others' serious depression and anxiety disorders often remain untreated). We take all manner of medication to change our moods and our feelings. And it's all socially sanctioned. In fact, it's increasingly expected. But we think that someone who smokes marijuana or drinks wine to calm down is somehow different from the rest of us.

Denial And Ambivalence

The concept from the disease model that speaks most clearly to families is that of denial. If the user does not stop using as a result of all the trouble he or she gets into, denial must be the reason. Denial is being misused here. The real definition of denial is a psychological defence (in the form of a true lack of memory) against some fact or event that is too painful or troublesome to tolerate

consciously. We believe that drug users use the defence of denial no more frequently than anybody else. It is a psychological 'safety valve' that allows reality to enter our awareness at a rate that we can cope with.

Let's say you have a personal limitation that although not life threatening, feels like a 'fatal flaw'. Your fatal flaw is that you are a terrible cook. In your heart of hearts, you know that the only thing that lies between you and bland spaghetti, blackened meat loaf and runny eggs is the Thai restaurant on the corner, but when your friends at the office organise a party and you are asked to bring a dish, you want to show off so you consider making your special mashed potatoes. You decide instead to select a number of dishes from your favourite Thai restaurant. A few of your colleagues jokingly ask if you even know how to cook! You tell them you are a fine cook but you didn't have time to make anything.

Are you in denial? Of course not. You know that lumpy, watery mashed potatoes are disgusting, that no one will eat them and you will be humiliated. But you are torn. You want to join in and be part of the office event. You also want to hide your fatal flaw. You aren't in denial. You lied!

Maybe you're in a relationship that isn't going so well. You've put a lot of energy into trying to work things out, but your partner still gets really angry and yells at you, sometimes even threatens you. Some of your friends have noticed and are worried. They keep on telling you that either you should insist on going to couple counselling or you should leave the relationship. You've suggested counselling but that makes him or her even angrier. So now you tell your friends that it's not really that bad, that you've been telling them only the bad stuff and that they don't get to see how wonderful your partner can be most of the time. You tell them that you also bear some responsibility for how things are going. You tell them that the two of you are talking more now, and you're sure things will get better soon.

Are you in denial? Probably not. You could simply be expressing hope and optimism. You're fully aware of the problems in the relationship and may even realise that you're not the cause of your partner's anger. But you love, and don't want to lose, this person. This is the first relationship you've had in two years. You're ambivalent about doing anything that might rock the boat. So you minimise the problem and focus on more positive aspects. In this way you are expressing your hopefulness that the relationship will work out and blocking out your friends' more pessimistic assessment. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

There is surprisingly little actual denial on the part of the people who use alcohol and other drugs. Every time a drinker is confronted about her use of alcohol, she feels it. She may be lying, minimising the problem, ambivalent, hopeful that she can make it better, hopeless about doing anything different, or fearful about losing that warm blanket that alcohol wraps around her each evening, but she's not in denial. Layers and layers of defences have been built up around her drug problem, and when confrontation cuts through all of that, what comes back at you sounds a lot like denial. It's not denial: it's the wall built up to protect herself from the onslaught of your confrontation. Confrontation breeds armour and defensiveness, not awareness or thoughtfulness.

. . . to be continued

Beautiful Byron

Evan Thomas

My first visit to NSW's most easterly landmark, the Cape Byron lighthouse was over thirty years ago. In tow behind my underpowered Peugeot 404 was a caravan, three young children and a stoic spouse who viewed caravans with some suspicion. That view, which rapidly changed to loathing, persists to this day. We were travellin' north.

Behind the sand dunes a little to the north of Byron Bay were the bleached skeletal remains of many whales, now long gone, no doubt in the interests of the new civic pride. Today of course Cape Byron is a favourite lookout for live whales, also travellin' north.

But enough of the travelogue.

In the Sunday Extra section of the Sydney Sun-Herald of January 9th was an article entitled 'Kicking the habit in style' which told the story of a new Byron Bay luxury drug rehab centre 'the Sanctuary' with views over Tallows Beach. The Sanctuary claims to have 'the ultimate, most influential and exclusive rehabilitation program available'. Its website features frangipanis, Buddha statues and of course, the lighthouse.

At \$28,000 a week the cost is greater than internationally known up-market centres such as Promises in Malibu (\$11,000 a week), the Meadows in Arizona (\$9,000 a week) and the Crossroads Centre in Antigua (\$19,000 for 29 days).

At the Sanctuary patients get their own luxury home and up to a dozen therapists if required. The director, Michael Goldberg, a former heroin user was a patient at the Buttery, the other, rather better known, free rehab centre at Byron. It was there that the concept of an up-market therapeutic retreat was envisaged by Mr Goldberg.

Dr Alex Wodak, head of Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital alcohol and drug services says the Sanctuary fulfils a demand for a service for high-flyers with addiction problems, who want to be treated anonymously. There are a handful of private clinics in Sydney, but they are not exactly luxurious. An alternative is the Betty Ford Centre in the US, to which Dr Wodak would refer the rich and famous.

'If you are a judge or an MP with a problem, there hasn't been many options in Australia', Dr Wodak says. 'There is no shortage of people in the upper income bracket with drug and alcohol problems.'

Lynne Fishwick, CEO of South Pacific Private Hospital at Curl Curl, a Sydney northern beaches suburb, says she does not believe five-star surroundings lead to a better recovery for patients.

Like the Sanctuary, the hospital runs a residential program for drug addicts in a beachside location! but at a cost of \$3850 a week, most of which is reimbursed with private health cover.

'Luxury is not what makes people well,' she says.

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre spokesman Paul Dillon says until a national study is completed on the success of various treatments for drug addiction, it is difficult to say whether the

Sanctuary's program offers value for money or not. Treatments used in Australia include medication-assisted detox, methadone, naltrexone and buprenorphine maintenance; and residential rehabilitation with group therapy.

'All we know is that different treatments work for different people,' Dillon says. 'And that 70 to 90 per cent of drug users relapse within 12 months. The more times they try the better chance of success. Dillon says no rehab clinic, even one charging \$28,000 a week, can offer a guaranteed cure. 'It comes down to whether the person actually wants to give up.'

I doubt if the research is intended to show if geography is a significant factor in determining the efficacy of treatment. However, if I were in the unfortunate position of having to seek treatment and had the ability to choose, beautiful Byron Bay would get my vote.

Crime Facts Info No. 93

From National Police Custody Survey: Offences

Australian Institute Of Criminology (15/3/05)

Arising from recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Australian Institute of Criminology conducted the fourth national police custody survey in October 2002 with the cooperation of each police jurisdiction in Australia. One of the variables recorded was the most serious offence for which the person was in custody.

The figures show that people were most likely to be in custody for violent, property or public order offences. The most common offence for non-Indigenous persons was property offences. Among Indigenous persons just under one quarter of custody incidents were for public order offences. Indigenous persons were more likely than non-Indigenous persons to be in custody for public order, violent and justice offences while non-Indigenous persons were more likely than Indigenous persons to be in custody for traffic and drug offences. Indigenous persons have markedly lower incidences of drug and fraud offences than non-Indigenous persons.

These figures refer only to incidents in which an offence was recorded and so exclude incidents of custody for public drunkenness where this is not an offence (New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the ACT).

Bumper Crop Of Drug Overdose Scares

Misses The Real Story

Dan Stapleton, Sydney Morning Herald (9/3/05)

With the help of the internet, users are learning about what they are taking, with beneficial results, writes Dan Stapleton.

If media reports this week are to be believed, the war on drugs is far from won. Our children are doomed to a lifetime of schizophrenia because of all the marijuana they're smoking in primary school. Heroin use is down, only to be replaced by other life-threatening drugs. And the manufacture and consumption of amphetamines is out of control.

Scary stuff. 'The Federal Government should be 'seriously concerned' about the abuse of party drugs, including the potentially lethal GHB, as heroin dries up and new drugs gain popularity,' a report in the Herald told us, citing the latest report by the International Narcotics Control Board.

Others talked of 'clandestine drug laboratories' manufacturing huge amounts of amphetamines from the pseudoephedrine present in over-the-counter cold and flu tablets and there were the reports of the mental effects of cannabis.

Not to be outdone, the ABC delivered a sensationalist, marijuana-themed Four Corners, introducing us to a group of doped-up kids, some of whom had started smoking as young as 12. The ABC dubbed the program a 'wake-up call', hammering the 'youth at risk' line home with the alarmist proclamation that, 'Many young people begin smoking cannabis before they have even hit their teens!and experts are warning that the younger the smoker, the greater the risk of mental illness.'

It would be easy to draw the conclusion that Australia is in the midst of a drug-use crisis, yet nothing could be further from the truth.

At a time when regression to old-fashioned morals is de rigueur, it is essential to keep the debate balanced.

What this coverage didn't tell you is that research and data shows a consistent decline in the number of drug-related deaths since the early 1990s when studies of this kind began. Drug overdoses and/or fatalities in Australia are at their lowest levels. Cigarettes and alcohol still cause 99 per cent of drug-related deaths. Nor are people informed, or aware, that today's drug users are, on average, more educated and responsible than their parents.

On balance, we're doing well controlling illicit drug usage. Fewer overdoses can only be good news. But who should be thanked? Drug control has never been high on the Federal Government's agenda, so it is misguided to attribute the progress of the past decade to it. Sure, it is busting its share of drug smugglers, thanks to tightened border control but, as the control board's report says, most of the drugs consumed here are made here.

The Government's other initiatives have been duds!print and TV advertising campaigns have been met with a mixture of amusement and disdain by a drug-using populace cynical of cliched scare tactics.

Yes, the drug-using public is safer and better educated than ever, and not because of the Government. Rather, it's a result of the rising trend of harm-minimisation as an alternative to zero tolerance.

This shift has been precipitated, in part, by the internet. On-line forums such as bluelight.nu and pillreports.com allow anyone on the net to find out the exact contents of the pill they've just bought,

or learn about the side effects of particular drugs. Tens of thousands access these sites daily.

Elsewhere, support groups for those trying to kick an illicit habit or recover from a bad experience are plentiful, non-judgemental and, most importantly, free.

These on-line communities and their off-line counterparts operate on the assumption that drugs! from alcohol to opiates! will always be used and that education is the only way to reduce their harmful consequences.

It's a no-brainer: people want to know what they're putting into their bodies, and they don't want to be condemned. It's encouraging to note that, to date, almost all the harm minimisation and drug education has been implemented at the grassroots level: just imagine how many more lives could be saved if the Government got on board the harm minimisation train, too.

Of course, the Government would never condone harm minimisation. And perhaps unsurprisingly, when I asked the federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, about on-line harm reduction communities late last year, he told me he'd never heard of them. `But any site encouraging drug use is encouraging its readers to dice with death,' he told me. `It's incredibly irresponsible of them.'

With a Government unwilling to engage in debate, the responsibility then falls to the media. Which, in light of this week's bumper crop of anti-drug stories, can be a depressing prospect.

By all means, keep us informed on new research, and don't stop showing us the human face of drug-use gone awry. But try to keep the hyperbole to a minimum. Things are getting better. And it's because those tempted to use drugs are able to make truly informed decisions.

Zero Tolerance A Big Zilch

Jane Fynes-Clinton, The Courier-Mail (17/3/05)

Los Angeles police chief Bill Bratton!the man credited with using a so-called zero tolerance approach to bring the mean streets of New York into line in the 1990s made a startling admission on Tuesday at the international police commissioners' conference in Brisbane.

Zero tolerance policing, he said, was unworkable. Assembled media chins clunked on the floor.

Zero tolerance had been wrongly linked with his efforts to clean up New York, where he was chief of police in the 1990s, Bratton said. While a change in strategy was implemented! police presence beefed up and crackdowns unapologetically more widespread! crime reduction was the aim, not zero tolerance. It was a misunderstanding, he said, a big misnomer.

The world had it wrong all along. It's like singing along with a favourite song all your life and discovering you've been singing the wrong words. Or finding out a deep, dark family lie, or that your favourite restaurant dish includes some incongruous ingredient that you wouldn't consume on its own in a pink fit. News like that leads to feelings of insecurity and distrust. It rocks the foundations.

If the man who is credited with inventing zero tolerance doesn't believe in it, should it continue to

exist at all? Can you undo what has become a disciplinary and behaviour management cornerstone? Let me put the enormity of Bratton's statement in context. In two years as police chief in New York, murders halved and serious crime fell by 39 per cent overall. The approach he implemented with mayor Rudy Giuliani was heavy-handed: no second chances, no room for negotiation.

The strategy involved cracking down on minor crimes like fare evasion and graffiti in an effort to prevent them mutating into bigger ones. Bratton facilitated a society that embraced 'locking 'em up, kicking 'em out and getting 'em off the street'.

But it wasn't meant to be zero tolerance. It was just heavy-handed policing.

Under Bratton and his successors, the New York police force grew by a fifth and the budget nearly doubled.

There was police saturation on the streets, jails bursting at the seams, complaints against police a mile long and a community cauldron of simmering resentment. Innocents were sometimes caught in the net, including school kids who were punished for having toy guns (weapons offence), caffeine (drugs violation) or hitting bullies back (assault). Many adults were jailed in error.

But the world looked on, saw cleaner streets and the so-called good guys winning, and loved what it saw. So it adopted the measure and gave it more muscle.

Sporting associations everywhere got on board. Education departments jumped on the bandwagon. Communities revelled in hitting back harder, at taking control by force, even if little or no force was used in the first place.

The tentacles of zero tolerance policies reach far and are now entrenched in too many facets of Australian society.

It is responsible for a Victorian teacher losing his job last week over a love affair he had with a teenager 13 years ago, when he was 20 and before he began teaching. That the relationship was consensual, or that he was a kid himself, was not taken into account. That he is said to be an excellent teacher means zip. That his principal has sought his reinstatement means nought.

That is why zero tolerance does not work: There are no second chances, no chance for explanation, no room for human circumstance. It is mechanical where what is needed is the application of human experience and thinking.

It erases the chance for wise, sound decisions and for the mistakes that must occur to refine the process of growth.

Perhaps the problem with zero tolerance is its birthplace. The United States is a nation with a high reliance on incarceration, a nation whose pride and identity is tied up with war and struggle.

Its identity is not ours and our approach should ideally be less gung-ho and more about partnership and teamwork.

Bratton himself has expressed admiration for the community philosophy Australian police services mostly aim to embrace.

And if zero tolerance makes zero sense to the man who hammered the bad Big Apple into semi-civility, the time has come to take a long, humane look at its applications here.

Have You Considered Leaving A Bequest To FDS?

Leaving a gift in your will can provide the financial support that we require to continue the worthwhile work of our charity.

Your bequest will assist FDS in continuing its valuable support of families struggling with the trauma of a loved one's drug or alcohol use. By pledging your support now, you will have the pleasure of knowing that you have made a gift to others struggling with these issues. Please call FDS to discuss your bequest.

UNODC Buckles Under US Pressure

Reversal Promotes Spread of HIV/AIDS

AHRN Press Release (9/2/05)

Recent pressure from the US Department of State has led the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, to state that UNODC will no longer support evidence-based responses designed to prevent the spread of the blood-borne virus, HIV.

As one of the co-sponsors of UNAIDS !the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS UNODC has previously supported measures aimed at reducing HIV risk amongst high-risk groups, including people who use drugs. UNODC's prior support for these `harm reduction' measures!which include the provision of new injecting equipment and pharmacotherapy treatment for drug dependent people !has been important in the ongoing fight to reduce HIV infection and other drug use-related harms, and should be commended.

In UNODC's 2004 publication, Drugs and HIV/AIDS in South East Asia, it is made clear that `The UNODC is fully aligned with the World Health Organisation in recognition of the need to adopt a Aharm reduction@ approach to the problem of HIV infection among injecting drug users (IDUs).'

Harm reduction is a means, not a goal. It is a means through which health care workers can reach out to people at risk of drug related harms!in particular, HIV. People who use drugs are often discriminated against, and the resulting social marginalisation means that many do not even have access to the most basic health care services. Needle and syringe exchange programs and pharmacotherapy, in conjunction with outreach activities, are essential components of

comprehensive and compassionate harm reduction responses.

The UNODC's own report goes on to state that 'Harm reduction approaches have not been adopted to any significant degree in the (South East Asian) region. However, those few cases in which they have been tried, such as in small-scale pilot projects, have found them to be effective in slowing, stabilising and reversing the spread of HIV among IDUs and their sexual partners.'

This slowing and subsequent reversal of the HIV epidemic is critical. With current estimates of between 7.4 and 10.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in Asia!and further estimates that by 2010 there will be more than 40 million people living with HIV in Asia alone!it is clear that evidence-based responses to the epidemic are essential.

With HIV infection in many Asian jurisdictions being disproportionately driven by the sharing and re-use of needles and syringes by people who inject drugs, harm reduction approaches have the potential to prevent millions of new HIV infections and thus stabilise and eventually reverse the course of this devastating epidemic.

The worldwide scientific evidence that harm reduction approaches save lives is overwhelming. The effectiveness and essential nature of these programs has been highlighted by the World Health Organisation, UNAIDS and UNODC in their 2004 joint policy guidelines, Evidence for Action on HIV/AIDS and injecting drug use.

In the policy brief called Provision of Sterile Injecting Equipment to Reduce HIV Transmission it states, 'The provision of access to sterile injection equipment for injecting drug users and the encouragement of its use are essential components of HIV/AIDS prevention programs, and should be seen as part of the overall comprehensive strategies to reduce the demand for illicit drugs . . . '

The Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN) is heartened to see the global alignment of organisations working towards the prevention of HIV presenting a unified voice and urging UNODC to stand by its previous support of measures aimed at reducing HIV risk amongst high-risk groups, including people who use drugs.

In the interests of public health and the common good, the Asian Harm Reduction Network joins the call for UNODC not to bow to short-sighted political imperatives and donor demands, and to continue its active role in supporting effective, evidence-based responses to drug use and HIV/AIDS.

In the absence of clear and unequivocal support of harm reduction by UNODC, the Asian Harm Reduction Network believes that Asia and other regions are facing increasingly dire health, economic and social impacts related to drug use and HIV/AIDS.

FDS Queensland May Be Forced To Close

The Queensland Government has refused funding to FDS Queensland!claiming services for families are adequately covered by ADIS and Holyoake.

Despite great success in providing services and seeing calls from Queensland to our help line increasing from 300 to over 2000 since we have had a local presence, it now appears we may have

to close our Brisbane office.

As good as the services provided by ADIS and Holyoake maybe, they do not provide the unique services and ongoing support that FDS provides.

It is particularly disappointing for local volunteers who have worked hard to help Queensland families. The Queensland board, Sonja Mahs who has run the support groups for over two years and particularly Carmel and Tamara Clifford who worked tirelessly to establish the service in Brisbane.

The Health Minister, Gordon Nuttall and his advisors have refused to meet to discuss the issue saying there is no likely funding until 2009.

A meeting of members and volunteers in March have vowed to fight on and target politicians with a letter writing campaign.

Party Drugs Could Fill Heroin Void

Alexandra Smith, Sydney Morning Herald (7/3/05)

The Federal Government should be 'seriously concerned' about the abuse of party drugs! including the potentially lethal GHB! as heroin dries up and new drugs gain popularity, an international report warns.

The latest report by the International Narcotics Control Board!the body responsible for implementing the UN drug conventions!says the trafficking of party drugs into the country was also a concern.

Heroin abuse is at its lowest level in five years, mainly because the drug is becoming more difficult to obtain, the report says.

'Party drugs, such as GHB, as well as ketamine trafficking and abuse, are a cause for serious concern in Australia, as is the abuse of several benzodiazepines diverted from licit distribution channels,' it says.

'The reduction in the availability of heroin in Australia has resulted in heroin abusers turning to other drugs.'

The federal Minister for Justice and Customs, Chris Ellison, said the Government was at the forefront of the fight against drugs and trafficking and rejected the report's assertions that it was a serious problem in Australia.

'No one can accuse this Government of being soft on drugs,' Senator Ellison said.

He said there had been 'record seizures' of party drugs such as GHB, as well as seizures of precursors, the raw chemicals readily available in pharmacies, supermarkets and hardware stores and commonly used in backyard laboratories to produce amphetamines.

The annual report was also again heavily critical of Sydney's drug injecting room in Kings Cross and the State Government's approval of a four-year extension of the controversial trial.

The Prime Minister, John Howard, last year used the board's criticism of the injecting room to question whether the NSW trial was a breach of Australia's international drug control treaty obligations.

In a letter to the Premier, Bob Carr, Mr Howard warned that potential breaches of treaty obligations could spark sanctions against Australia's \$100-million-a-year legal opiate industry.

But Andrew Plumley, a spokesman for the NSW Special Minister of State, John Della Bosca, said the injecting room was saving lives.

A report released last year by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre found 143 people aged between 15 and 54 died of heroin-related causes in NSW in 2003, the lowest figure since 1989.

Message Of Thanks

I am writing to thank Tony and Sandra and other families who have been involved with FDS over the past year or so.

My husband and I came to FDS for help; we were at our wits' end, trying to cope with our now 23-year-old son who has a very angry, aggressive attitude to life, himself and us. We feel this is caused largely due to his cannabis, come speed, come party drugs you name it!who knows what else? This game or trip he has been on since the age of 14.

We love our son very much, and would do anything to help him, what ever it takes. But the biggest dilemma is (as he would say) I DON'T NEED HELP! OR I CAN DO IT MYSELF!!!! OR MAYBE LATER!!!

This went on for years and still now his drug habit continues up and down. However, my husband and I have changed. We have learnt to live through the journey of our son, to love him, to encourage him, and to be there for him as well as trying to let go (not always how he would like it of course). We have also been educated into all drugs and their effects. All this guidance and support was given to us from attending FDS support meetings on Monday nights; also doing the Stepping Stones course as well as attending the monthly information and education nights that FDS organise. These nights have very interesting topics and speakers, all of which help and encourage us to live our lives.

We found last month to be particularly helpful. The topic was: The Things We Said And Did.

Nik, Jessica and Andy spoke of the impact of their lives, on and now off drugs. Their stories were different, but very similar in a lot of ways. They spoke of the enjoyment they experienced in their drug and alcohol use; they spoke of the lies and pain they dished out to their loved ones; they

spoke of the loneliness, the lack of motivation, the struggles to make ends meet!no money, no work, a life without purpose; but what was so real to all of them was that they were able to realise in that hazed out world that they wanted to stop and change where they were at.

As parents we were encouraged by these three who now have lives worth living.They have goals and purpose. They have passion and desires, all of which gives us reassurance and hope that our son will one day feel this same freedom. It was also encouraging to us that our drug-using son and his fiancée attended this meeting with us, asked questions and spoke at length with Andy. There is hope?

Thanks again FDS we value greatly your support. Our relationship with our son has improved greatly over the past year. We still have difficult times but my husband and I realise we can't live for our son. We have to live our lives too. Julie H

Lunatics Running The Asylum

Mental Health Conference To Be Held In Casino

Media Release (14/3/05)

In 2 September 2005, the Gold Coast Institute of Mental Health will be holding the 6th International Mental Health Conference at Conrad Jupiters Casino on the Gold Coast. Its theme will be 'What's new in mood disorders?'

Although regrettable, it is far from unusual for such events to be take place at elite, five star venues with attendance fees and venue security calculated to discourage all but the very well heeled from attending. However, in choosing Jupiters, the organisers of this conference have set a new standard of exclusivity and poor taste.

Jupiters Casino is one of the country's chief promoters of a mental disorder that afflicts almost 400,000 Australians and directly affects many thousand more!compulsive gambling. Over 90% of suffers report depression due to their gambling and one in five will attempt suicide. Every year, over two dozen succeed in killing themselves.

To hold a mental health conference at Jupiters Casino is akin to arranging a seminar on drug and alcohol addiction at an inner city pub. Consumers, survivors and victims of mental health services will feel themselves thoroughly excluded from this conference, particularly if they are living with a gambling problem.

The mental health industry is currently facing widespread criticism for its close relationship with pharmaceutical corporations. Indeed, the GCIMH boasts of its sponsorship by some of the world's most unethical purveyors of ineffective and dangerous psychiatric medications. But by joining hands with the gambling industry, the Institute has shown it has learned nothing from psychiatry's unsavoury past associations with some of history's most abusive and exploitative industries and regimes.

Justice Action calls on the Gold Coast Institute of Mental Health to immediately cancel its

arrangements with Jupiters and rebook its conference at a more appropriate venue. We also call on the Institute to `just say no' to drug company money, so as to avoid a conflict of interest.

Justice Action calls on all organisations who are sincerely concerned with the poor standard of mental health care in Australia to boycott the 6th International Mental Health Conference and to send a strong letter to the GCIMH explaining why they will not be attending.

Contact

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C Brett Collins 0438 705 003

Junkie Vaccine Call For Tots

The Age (26/2/05)

A group of Queensland Nationals want the Federal Government to investigate giving an anti-junkie vaccination to children under 12 months old. The vaccination, under development in the UK, would render children immune to becoming smokers or drug users and become part of the national measles, mumps and rubella vaccination program.

This weekend's Queensland Nationals central council meeting will debate calling for the investment.

`Drugs are a scourge,' said Nationals member Ken Wilson. `I feel strongly about this and I'm inviting the Federal

Government to investigate it and if it proves worthwhile, then do a vaccination program.'

Britain's Independent reported the jab would block out the euphoria associated with cocaine and heroin, and was due to be marketed within two years in Britain where the Department of Trade and Industry has set up a project to find scientific ways to break drug addiction.

British biotech firm Xenova has conducted trials of an anti-cocaine vaccine that showed that 58 per cent of patients remained cocaine-free after three months.

A Guide To Coping

Our family education kit A Guide To Coping is receiving acclaim across the country. Many professional agencies have praised the soundness of the information and strategies contained in the kit. This revised edition contains extra information and fact sheets introducing the new model of family coping and management, Stepping Stones to Success.

Subscribe to FDS Insight for 12 months and receive A Guide To Coping without additional cost.

(Note: Additional copies of A Guide To Coping can be purchased for \$15 and discounts apply for bulk orders.)

For more information, phone: 9798 0001

News From Overseas

Afghanistan

To Die For

Steven MacQueen worked in Afghanistan providing farmers with credit to stop growing the lucrative crops of poppies which end up as heroin. His murder last week is sending shock waves around the Western world as power in this already fragile nation slips into the hands of drug lords who rule with guns.

There are thousands of individuals whose daily work in turning the grand gestures of geo-policy into practical reality usually merit no more than a passing mention. Steven MacQueen was one of those people.

In Kabul, where he had been based since June 2003, he headed up the World Bank's Microfinance Investment and Support Facility for Afghanistan. It sounds like a high-powered job, and it was, but basically it involved making small amounts of credit available to peasant farmers to break their reliance on the lucrative poppy crops that end up as lethal heroin on Western streets.

In that sense, MacQueen was the nuts and bolts end of Tony Blair's promise, delivered in late autumn 2001 as the US prepared to displace the Taliban regime, that the invasion of Afghanistan would stamp out the heroin trade. MacQueen took up the challenge of making that happen. Having found easy success for over a decade in a merchant banking career, the 41-year-old from Hawick turned his back on big finance deals in London to use his skills in the nitty-gritty job of making small amounts of money work positively for some of the poorest people in the world.

Last Monday night MacQueen was gunned down in a Kabul street, probably because of his incidental connection with the poppy replacement program on which the West's hopes for a fragile nation rest.

The Western community in Kabul and the wide circle of friends he leaves from his time at Glasgow University, where I first met him, have been shocked by MacQueen's death!but the impact of his murder should ripple far beyond them.

His brutal slaying, which bore the hallmarks of a professional assassination, has underlined the fear in Western capitals that Afghanistan, even in Kabul's security bubble, is quickly slipping into a narco-state where control of the opium crop is power and the gun is the determinant of life and death.

Five days afterwards, there was still a sense of bewilderment in Kabul over the murder. Without a motive or suspects, members of the Western community are left fearful and apprehensive.

'I know it sounds brutal but if there was an explanation then people could discount themselves from being targets,' said one British resident yesterday. 'Without a motive we all feel like targets.'

On the night of his death, MacQueen had been to the Elbow Room, a popular and indeed Kabul's only up-market watering hole. Hidden away between the Chinese Embassy and the United Nations compound on Foreign Affairs Ministry Road, the bar is a little bit of west London come to Kabul. With roaring log fires for winter nights, it is the crossroads for Kabul's ex-pat community, a place where aid workers, embassy staff, military personnel and journalists rub shoulders and swap tall tales in safety.

Monday was the beginning of MacQueen's last week in Afghanistan. His contract with the Afghan government's ministry of rural rehabilitation was coming to an end. This weekend he was due to be in Washington where his pregnant fiancée, 32-year-old Texan Kay McGowan, was waiting.

MacQueen met McGowan, an assistant to the US ambassador, in Kabul in 2003. Their baby is due to be born in the next few weeks.

It seems that MacQueen was tailed by his killers as he drove away from the Elbow Room in a four-wheel drive vehicle that was badged up with ministry of rural rehabilitation logos.

Most aid and development workers operate under self-imposed curfews or security systems to reduce risks but in a part of Kabul that is well-patrolled by security forces, it is not unusual for Westerners to drive themselves or even to walk home. After Monday everyone says they will be more circumspect.

If his killers had been looking for a random Westerner, then the fair-skinned MacQueen, travelling in a government vehicle, fitted the bill. The ministry of rural rehabilitation stands for the opium replacement program in the eyes of many Afghans and there are many powerful people who do not welcome its work.

There are signs, however, that the killing of Steve MacQueen was far from random, but an audacious, well-organised hit.

On the main road, in front of the guest house for UN workers in Kabul and the Dutch Embassy, MacQueen's vehicle was overtaken by a black Toyota Landcruiser which then blocked his path and set in chain a text-book vehicle ambush. Within seconds another Landcruiser with tinted windows pulled up alongside MacQueen's vehicle, boxing him in. There was machine-gun fire from the second vehicle; at least two bullets hit MacQueen in the head and arm. Three bullet holes were later found in the gate of the Dutch Embassy. It was 10.15pm, MacQueen was dead on the spot, and the killers sped off into the night. It was not a case of wrong place, wrong time. Everything had gone according to plan, but whose plan?

The Afghan intelligence service is leading the investigation but there are no suspects and no motive. Part of the trouble is that the murder vehicles, darkened Landcruisers with tinted windows,

are the vehicle of choice for the bad guys and the good guys in Kabul. And that is only an aspect of a larger problem!sometimes it is difficult to tell the good guys and bad guys apart in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

'The drugs connection has to be high on the list of motives,' said a Briton who is in a position to closely observe the fledgling Afghan democracy. 'But the drug lords are the warlords and some of them are in the government.'

The byzantine connections between Afghanistan's burgeoning heroin economy and the levers of power wrap round Afghan politics like a vine. President Hamid Karzai has to balance between extending control beyond Kabul and the demands of the powerful warlords who are profiting from the massive increase in poppy production since the fall of the Taliban.

The murder of MacQueen, whose job was to create alternative livelihoods for farmers who have been growing opium poppy, could have been a signal to the president. His death, the first killing of a Briton in Kabul since the fall of the Taliban, could have been a message to the UK, the lead nation in the poppy eradication program, to back off.

There was immediate speculation, as there always is with the murderous death of a Westerner in a war-torn country, that MacQueen was connected to British or US intelligence. There is nothing to support that theory except that his lantern-jawed, clean-cut looks might have given the mistaken impression that he had some military bearing.

In and around Kabul, intelligence sources say, there is no need for Western undercover agents. The writ of the US military runs across the city and the British send small patrols into rural areas for days at a time to befriend villagers and gather intelligence.

Although there had been some attacks on foreigners over the past few months, these were thought to be connected with the animosity surrounding DynCorp, an American private security firm that has annoyed several warlords over its protection duties for the Afghan president and its counter-narcotics training role.

'Steve was very much into alternative livelihoods. DynCorp are ex-cops and ex-military guys and not very well regarded. We don't think there is any connection,' said one aid worker.

An altogether darker theory is that the murder was personally motivated. This was to be MacQueen's last week in Afghanistan and if he had slighted anyone it was their last chance for vengeance. The Pashtunwali code of honour that extends a hand of hospitality to strangers and guests in Afghanistan also has a flip side that dictates that a dishonour is avenged.

Close friends can think of no reason why MacQueen should have fallen foul of anyone. 'This is a small community where there are no secrets,' said one Westerner. 'If there was something personal then people would have known about it.'

Few people gave credibility to a Taliban claim of responsibility for MacQueen's murder, although it has said it would attack Westerners working with the government and aid workers as well as military targets.

'The Taliban are very amateurish and they can't really operate in Kabul,' said one aid worker. In October, a militant blew himself up along with an American woman and an Afghan girl on a popular shopping street and there has not been a rocket attack for months. The occasional night-time burst of small arms fire or controlled explosions of weapons caches by Nato-led peace-keepers are regular reminders of the dangers still present in Kabul.

MacQueen seems to have been as popular amongst the aid community in Kabul as he was at Glasgow University where his easy charm and cheeky grin won admirers across the campus. He was elected vice-president of the student council for a year, which was no mean feat for a Tory boy from Hawick at a West Scotland university in the 1980s. Over the years he didn't just change his politics, he actually acted on his conscience to help other people, not something many lifelong left-wingers can claim.

On Thursday, more than 100 mourners, most of them British, attended a memorial service for him in Kabul which had been planned as his leaving party.

The work he was involved in will continue, but aching slowly. The British government has committed UK ,100 million to counter-narcotics operations in Afghanistan, siding with Karzai in opposing the US option of crop spraying. Heroin production has rocketed in the country since the fall of the Taliban and Afghanistan, which produces 90% of all the heroin on Britain's streets, grew an estimated 4200 tons of the drug in 2004, an increase of almost a fifth on the previous year. Heroin is Afghanistan's biggest export and the country is in danger of becoming a 'narcotic state', according to the latest UN report.

'The alarm bells are sounding all the time on Afghanistan and I don't see the evidence that we are tackling poppy eradication effectively,' says David Cairns, the Greenock and Inverclyde MP who campaigns against heroin in his constituency.

Cairns hopes to raise MacQueen's case in Westminster tomorrow when fellow Labour MP, Glasgow Govan's Mohammad Sarwar is due to ask a question on heroin traffic from Afghanistan.

Cairns has a mantra that the price of invading Afghanistan in 2001 must not be cheaper heroin on the streets of Scotland. Steven MacQueen may have paid with his life trying to fulfil a political promise on heroin that is proving hard to keep. There may be no ready answer to his cruel murder, but it has already sent a signal that despite the hoo-hah about democracy and reconstruction, there is a real danger that the West will lose the peace in Afghanistan.

As one British aid worker said yesterday: 'This is Kabul and anything is possible.' The Observer (13/3/05)

New Zealand

New Approach To Anti-Drug Push

A new anti-drug initiative in Taranaki schools is being heralded as the single biggest king-hit for youth justice by New Zealand's leading judge.

High on Life is a revolutionary way of looking at drugs in schools and is trying to stop the destructive cycle of exclusion punishment.

Principal Youth Court Judge Andrew Becroft is backing the initiative and will be in New Plymouth tomorrow and Friday talking to principals and community workers.

‘It’s about the most effective first step we can take to attack youth offending, and it deserves community support,’ he said.

The program deals with drug offending in schools by way of second-chance counselling and education rather than by traditional suspensions and expulsions, and all 13 Taranaki secondary schools are promoting it simultaneously.

‘Just the simple fact of retaining kids at school, even just being there, is a hugely protective factor,’ Mr Becroft said.

‘You could almost go as far as to say that every young person kept at school is one less potential youth offender.’

While the results of the program would be evaluated in two years, Mr Becroft said the real benefits could be felt up to 10 years down the track in the courts.

‘A drug user excluded from school is simply a problem relocated, not a problem solved. Eighty per cent of those we see in the youth court are not engaged at school,’ he said.

Ministry of Education special education facilitator Mark Corrigan said the initiative was about creating an honest and open relationship between students, schools and alcohol and drug agencies.

‘It’s about changing the way schools think about it, and making alcohol and drug agencies more accessible,’ he said.

He said one-on-one counselling often did not work with youths, especially the group most likely to be caught with drugs, 14-year-old boys.

A similar program had been tried in Wanganui previously and Taranaki was a logical venue for the concept as half of the exclusion statistics in schools were for drug-related incidents.

Inglewood High School principal Angela Gattung was enthusiastic about the novel way of dealing with an increasing problem in schools.

‘It’s actually trying to take the punishment out of it. It’s trying to help kids in an educational sense rather than a punitive sense,’ she said.

Mihi Kahu, manager of community organisation Raumano Trust in Patea, said the innovative approach was the key to students making sensible choices. ‘Other models haven’t worked. This has a lot of positivity to it,’ she said.

Mr Becroft hoped the High on Life program would stretch from Taranaki across the country.

`It's such a tragedy in the youth court to see a life wasted and blighted by alcohol and drug dependence.

`I was in the youth court today with a boy like that. If only he could have got help at the school in the first place,' he said.

Nick Churchouse, The Daily News (9/5/05)

United States

US War On Drugs A `Tragic Failure'

The US War on Drugs that is run from Washington DC is a `tragic failure' and should be wrested away from the feds and devolved to state level. So says an influential coalition of lawyers, doctors and church leaders in Washington state that is pressing for radical changes in drug policy.

Last week one of the coalition's members, the Seattle-based King County Bar Association, published a 146-page report recommending that the state should control production and distribution of psychoactive drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and heroin. It has long argued that drug problems should be seen primarily as a public health issue, rather than a criminal justice problem! and hence a matter for state rather than federal government.

The association is hoping that Washington state will pass a law to establish a commission on the problem. Around a dozen other states are working on similar proposals.

Despite spending more than \$45 billion over the past 25 years and increasing the numbers of people imprisoned for drug offences more than tenfold, the federal strategy has failed to curb drug use, the coalition says. Drugs are cheaper and easier to get than ever, it adds. New Scientist (12/3/05)

Anti-Drug DA Facing Possession Charge

Pampa, Texas: Rick Roach got elected district attorney in West Texas on a vow to rid the streets of drug dealers and users, and he went after them mercilessly.

`Drugs, drug usage, drug trafficking has become a scourge in our society,' Roach thundered during closing arguments at a drug trial that sent a 30-year-old man to prison for 60 years in 2001.

Few guessed, until recently at least, the hypocrisy behind it all: Roach himself did drugs. Roach, 55, was arrested inside a courtroom Jan. 11 and charged with possessing methamphetamine and cocaine. In February, he took a plea bargain on one charge!possession of a gun by a drug addict. He could get up to 10 years in prison when he is sentenced in mid-April.

Roach told The New York Times that he had suffered from depression since age 13, and that he used illegal drugs to medicate himself. `I just sort of, you might say, went nuts: I made irrational and

wrong decisions,' he told the newspaper. `There's no excuse. I've gotten what I deserve.'

Now under house arrest at his mother's home until sentencing, he declined to comment to the Associated Press. An electronic monitoring device prohibits him from venturing more than 200 feet from the house.

The tough-on-drugs DA won re-election in November in his five-county Texas Panhandle district and was just days into his second term when he was arrested.

John Mann, the district attorney who lost to Roach in 2000, said he noticed a difference in the man about 18 months before Roach stepped down in February. Roach had `kind of backed off' drug prosecutions, Mann said. `I think it was probably his inability to be coherent,' Mann said. `I saw him acting like a fool for a year and half.'

Roach became prone to extreme mood swings and was sometimes incoherent and paranoid, according to court documents. He also had lost 30 pounds and his skin was sallow.

Shortly before his arrest, a worker in his office in Pampa found a syringe containing meth residue floating in a toilet. And according to court records, Roach shot up drugs in front of an employee in his office.

`Who in their right mind would inject themselves in front of an employee?' Roach told The Times.

He also had trouble sitting still and had unexplained absences from work. In December, he appeared `wired' during a court hearing, fumbling through papers and repeating what defence lawyers said until a judge told him to be quiet, Mann said.

That same month, outside a different courtroom, Roach was jumpy and could not carry on a coherent conversation, prompting courthouse employees to speculate that he was `on something,' said Leslie Breeding, the Roberts County attorney.

`There have been rumours for years, but this time it was so pronounced and so obvious it really couldn't be ignored,' Breeding said.

Roach was arrested after federal agents said they were tipped off by people in law enforcement.

David Holmes, a prosecutor under Roach between 2001 and 2003, said Roach at times was friendly and talked about his Christianity; he even sang a few times in a gospel band. But more often, Roach was demeaning, controlling and paranoid, he said.

Roach started locking the main door at his courthouse office, requiring any visitor to knock before seeing the receptionist. Every Friday afternoon, he sent his staff home and stayed alone in the office, where he kept several loaded guns. Roach rarely tried drug cases himself, but made those prosecutions his priority.

Betsy Blaney, Bradenton Herald (15/3/05)

Drug Ban Looks More Like A Bocce Botch-Up

Jacquelin Magnay, Sydney Morning Herald (19-20/2/05)

In one of the most bizarre drug testing cases in Australia, two elderly Victorian bocce players face two-year bans from the sport after testing positive to banned drugs they took for their heart conditions.

But the bocce players, one an Italian immigrant in his 60s who speaks limited English and a slightly younger woman, were both taking medically prescribed beta-blockers as part of their heart medications when they gave their urine samples during the Australian championships in Adelaide, just before the Athens Olympics.

It is understood the man is particularly distressed at the test results and there are serious fears for his health.

The court of arbitration for sport is hearing the cases and determining whether the players will be banned from the sport.

But Victorian bocce enthusiasts, largely of Italian descent and over 50, have rallied around the players, and some colleagues are outraged.

One player who did not want to be named complained the drug testers were 'over the top' and 'destroying the two people's lives'.

'As if these two people playing a sport they enjoy are seeking to cheat. They are taking the drugs to simply live,' he said.

An Australian Sports Drug Agency spokesman, Sean Winnett, said he could not confirm any current investigations until the agency's quarterly results were released next week. He said the agency had conducted seven tests in the sport of bocce in the past financial year.

'The sport receives government funding and has an anti-doping policy, so that is why bocce players are tested,' he said. 'No one is doubting that bocce is a lower-risk sport than some others going around, but you can see that by the fact they receive low levels of testing.'

The bocce incident has exposed an educational weakness in the system.

Usually, athletes who are taking prescribed medications can seek therapeutic-use exemptions from the drug agency beforehand. In both of these cases, the exemptions had not been sought.

Under its charter, the agency has the legislative power to test 104 sports, including fringe activities such as ultralight aircraft, ballooning, flying disc, fishing, rock climbing, tug-of-war and vigoro.

Thought For The Month

No matter where you go!

there you are!

Luka Bloom, Irish singer

Is "Drink Stupid" Jim Beam's Real Slogan?

Geoff Munro, GrogWatch (21/3/05)

Viewers of the (AFL) Footy Show on Channel 9 last Thursday would be astonished to learn that Jim Beam's corporate slogan is 'Drink Smart'. Jim Beam now sponsors The Footy Show and Jim Beam's Mike Porter told B & T Weekly why: The Jim Beam drinker is 'irreverent', 'humorous', 'mostly male, in their early 20s with more of an attitude and The Footy Show profile was obviously a good fit' (11 March 2005, p.4). Obviously. It only took until the second show for the year for Sam Newman to virtually skoll a bottle on air. He drank it very fast, to the cheers of the studio audience. He gave the impression he was severely affected. At the end of the program, the host, Eddie McGuire said it was 'cold tea'. That, of course, is beside the point.

Football does not need this. AFL clubs are trying to educate their players so they can avoid the alcohol fuelled tragedies of recent years. Remember St Kilda this time last year? Junior clubs (under the Australian Drug Foundation's Good Sports banner) are trying to eliminate the binge drinking traditions that bedevil the sport.

The Footy Show (both the AFL and NRL versions) will promote Jim Beam every week through the season. Their antics will enshrine the belief for some who think binge drinking is part of the game. We can expect lots of drunk jokes and happy references to binges. Billy Brownless will pretend to be legless. It will set back football by years. For supporters, players and officials who adopt The Footy Show model of drinking, it could be catastrophic.

'Drink stupid' is a good description of Newman's buffoonery. Unless Jim Beam disowns Newman we will understand the worth of 'Drink Smart'. It is an empty slogan designed to disguise its real strategy.

It's vital that we don't write this off as a cynical attempt by The Footy Show to raise ratings. This is Jim Beam's marketing strategy. It will continue all season unless it is stopped.

One person who might listen is Andrew Demetriou, chief of the AFL. He is too smart to think Jim Beam is smart. Let him know how you feel about Jim Beam's binge drinking strategy for AFL football. It takes 5 minutes to write a letter.

His address is below. Let him know you care about the future of football, reducing alcohol problems, saving lives. If you know any clubs in the ADF's Good Sports program, suggest they write or e-mail too. It's their future.

Mr Andrew Demetriou, CEO

Australian Football League

GPO Box 1449N

MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Horse (A Heroin Poem)

You are now larger than life

Tens of thousands screaming your name

Too much too fast

You are not sure this undeserved success will last

The pain that fuelled your art

Is still tearing you apart

What you need is a friend

One who will be with you until the end

I am the Horse

I don't care

About your fortune or fame

I am the Horse

I don't care

About your family or name

Hop on my back for a free ride

Don't believe them about slow suicide

Together we will go and hide

Our bond will last a lifetime

I'll ease your pain

I'll numb your brain

Your friends and family will not understand

How we can be such intimate friends

Who else makes you feel this way

As I take your troubles away

I have removed all your doubt

Isn't this what love is all about

You are young and strong

Can handle anything

To an empty God

You are now praying

It is now too late

You have sealed your fate

Once more push the needle in

Once more inject the venom

My will is stronger than yours

Now that I am under your skin

You are flying so high

Who is listening as your children cry

I am the Horse I don't care

I have many pretty names

I am the Horse I don't care

I have always been the same

Riding in the back of a limousine

A spoon, a syringe and a full magazine

Whether you're in a penthouse suite

Lying in an alley or a shooting gallery

To me they are all the same

As long as I own your veins

You thought you had no innocence left to lose

At first, you chose me, now it's me that chooses you

You thought that money

Was the only price to pay

You will do whatever I require

To remain bound in my chains

Call my name

Every time you call

The deeper into me

You will fall

I am the Horse

I don't care

About what you have become

I am the Horse

I don't care

To my power you have succumbed

It was your pain that brought you to me

It was your pain you thought I took away

It is your pain that keeps you with me

Try to leave, I will increase it a thousand-fold everyday

In the end

You will not care about your family or friends

This is the end

Your very last fix

It is time I ford you across the River Styx

I am the Horse

I don't care

Who is the next in line

I am the Horse

I welcome the curious

Hey you, how about a free ride

Steve Giacomin

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Mental Health Charter

This is a copy of the Charter for Mental Health in NSW by NSW Health. It may give us some thoughts for when we are on the phone.

Every person in NSW has the right to Mental Health Services that:

1. Respect human rights.
2. Are compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the individuals they serve.
3. Foster positive attitudes to mental health in the larger community.
4. Promote positive mental health.
5. Encourage true consumer involvement at all levels of service delivery and policy development.
6. Provide effective treatment and care across the lifespan.
7. Are widely accessible to people with mental health needs.
8. Provide care in the least restrictive environment, consistent with treatment requirements.
9. Provide effective and comprehensive prevention programs across the lifespan.
10. Promote 'living well' with mental illness.
11. Address quality of life issues such as accommodation, education, work and income, leisure and sport, home and family and other relationships.
12. Use language that reduces stigma, discrimination or negativity for those affected and their families.
13. Respect and are responsive to the diversity in lifestyle, sexuality and sexual preference.
14. Are culturally sensitive and appropriate to the needs of the individuals they serve.
15. Encourage and support self-help.

Memorial Corner

To remember loved ones who have lost their lives to illicit drugs

For inclusion on this list, please call the office on (02) 9798 0001

Don's Review

`A novel, in my view, has six basic elements:

1. It must have a society of characters.
2. They must be undergoing transformations.
3. This must be in the course of a sustained prose narrative.
4. The prose narrative must be driven by a plot.
5. It must be unified by clearly discernible central themes.
6. It must be universalised by a complex architecture of allegorical and symbolical substrata.

So, to bring this down to one sentence, a novel is a society of characters, undergoing transformations, in the course of a sustained prose narrative, which is impelled by a plot, unified by clearly discernible central themes, and universalised by a complex architecture of allegorical and symbolical sub-strata. If any one of these six elements is missing, we do not have a novel. We might have something else, but we haven't got a novel.'

So writes Gregory David Roberts on his web site (www.shantaram.com). This is not all he writes, not by a long shot. In fact judging by the size of his novel, Shantaram, and the amount of material on his web site, you would have to say that Mr Roberts has a way with words. Plenty of words. Millions of words. The computer-minded amongst us can journey to the website for themselves and take a remarkable and rewarding magical mystery tour. Philosophy, poetry, the image gallery, the author's own views of himself (in some detail), but more philosophy than anything else; and a zeal and an earnestness that can only have come from `being there'. Being there, for Mr Roberts, can come under a variety of interpretations. It can refer to his time in gaol for armed robbery, his breakout of a maximum security prison in Victoria (over the front wall if you like . . . and in broad daylight!), his travels through New Zealand (quickly) to India, easily for me the most fascinating part of the book, Asia (Afghanistan), Africa and to a lesser degree Europe. And then the expiation.

Roberts was a heroin addict, a smuggler, a counterfeiter, and in various other ways made himself unpopular with a whole lot of people. There was feeling amongst some of his contacts that he would be the man most unlikely to enjoy old age. However, he established a free medical clinic for the lowest stratum of society in Bombay and he is quick on his web site to recommend the famous international group, Medicines without Frontiers, for your spare dollars. His journey to a remote Indian village and learning of the language is mind-boggling. The clarity and dog-eat-dog description of the railway journey will live with me forever. I know there are more important things in the book, but Roberts has a way of evoking crowd scenes that virtually chill your blood, or to put it another way, scare the hell out of you.

Another crowd scene that comes to mind from the earlier parts of the book is to do with a totally obnoxious taxi driver who gets more than his just deserts at the hands of an angry mob. That is a frightening scene, and his guide is (with great good reason) terrified and he urgently spirits Roberts

away. And yet Roberts can be excruciatingly funny, as in a scene just prior to this appalling demonstration of crowd anger. He has accepted (it would have been difficult not to) a fascinating local as his guide and mentor whilst he is in Bombay. This little man proves to be a jack of all trades, knows everybody, knows the ropes, and represents Roberts's salvation in one sense which you can read for yourself. Amongst other things, he escorts Roberts to his father's home village. To get there they cross the Deccan, change trains and awful buses, and eventually end up on an ox cart where we get probably the first sign in the novel of Roberts's great sensitivity to the sanctity of life.

I must mention at this point that the Indians are fascinated that he eats cows. The general curiosity of all is expressed when the guide's father asks, after realising that many thousands of cattle are involved, how come it doesn't hurt the cows to eat bits off them.

Anyway, back to just before the taxi driver meets his doom. This taxi driver really is an unpleasant individual and quite obviously has a strong dislike for foreigners. He makes Roberts feel particularly uncomfortable in the back of the cab and also constantly abuses slower traffic whilst threatening the life and limb of unfortunates who are unable to get out of his way. He also delivers great gobs of spit out the taxi window with unerring aim. Because the writing is so good, so colourful, you find yourself agreeing with Roberts that 'the guy is a nutcase', and you are repelled by everything about him. Yet immediately you can't help cracking up laughing when the guide, Prabaker, responds to this comment with his own assessment of the situation:

'Driving is not so good, but I have to say, the spitting and insulting is a first-class job.'

I also learnt what a lot of you probably know: that the best friends of a smuggler are mules and camels. You knew that, didn't you? I had to think for a minute, and then I realised (well, he tells us, actually) that these in fact are human mules and camels. The mules are the ones who carry the contraband drugs across the border. The camels, as Roberts quaintly puts it, help the smuggler himself to get across the border: he insinuates himself into the company of fellow travellers, the camels, and they come across as a group. When he enters Bombay we have an excellent example of this technique. He befriends a group of young New Zealanders and, on his fake passport, which really is not a first-class job as he has done it himself, he swans into India.

It's very nervous writing, even at this early stage. You feel the tension mounting, you feel the perspiration, it runs down your back at the customs desk, and then when you come with Roberts out into this seething world of people. Prabaker is the best thing that could possibly happen to him in these early, testing days.

If you want to become moral over the whole thing, then regardless of what is going to happen to sustain the narrative of the novel and comply with those six criteria listed above, it's evident that Roberts has a deep moral concern for his fellow man even at this early stage. So probably the heroin addiction that caused his incarceration in the first place was the only thing between Roberts and a kind of humanitarian priesthood. You can see an outline of his life, event by event, on the website.

He is very concerned when he discovers that a whole team of men is employed on a full-time basis to constantly refill a water tank on the roof of his hotel, so that he may have his several showers a day. However, Prabaker spells out to Roberts that his showering is providing employment for

several men who need to feed their families. He consequently resolves to have several showers every day.

The book has a wonderful capacity to draw comparisons between greed and love, rich and poor, hatred and hope, and surfeit and famine. To be honest, I'm not sure if I borrowed this from Roberts or if the notes are my own, but it doesn't really matter because it is right. The Shantaram is nearly a thousand pages long and yet it is absolutely engrossing. I'm resisting every impulse to spoil anything for you, but at the same time you are probably going to have to sacrifice the next three or four books you are going to read, or postpone them, because this one is huge. That doesn't matter, because it is such a great story. When Tony asked me if I could review this book, he tentatively threw into the conversation that it was a thousand pages long. It may be long, but it's compulsive.

I don't know where Roberts is headed now, as far as his literary career is concerned. It appears from his website that his commitment to things humanitarian takes priority over all other matters. His is a most remarkable story, and it could be that this is the only book that he has in him. This was true of, for example, Harper Lee with her wonderful and heavily auto-biographical, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as indeed it has been true of many great writers and their single works of literature. Perhaps I missed some of the reviews on publication of this book. It should be better known. *Shantaram* is a milestone in the world of humanitarianism and drug rehabilitation. Read it and never be the same again.

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