

Media Release

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SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH

To mark the Support. Don't Punish global day of action (26 June), Directions Health Services is reiterating its call for decriminalisation of personal drug use and for policy and funding to focus on health, well-being and harm minimisation.

At the end of last year, Directions Health Services released its Decriminalisation to Reduce Harm and Positively Impact on Drug Use Position Paper.

“Support. Don't Punish is an international grassroots campaign aimed at motivating governments around the world to stop basing the ‘war against drugs’ on criminalisation of drug users, but rather to support harm reduction and drug policies that prioritise public health and human rights,” Directions Health CEO, Bronwyn Hendry explained.

“This is very much in line with what our organisation advocates for.

“We know the current approach of criminal penalties and sanctions for offences involving use and possession of small amounts of illicit drugs does not reduce drug use or the impact of drug use on individuals or our community more broadly.

“Yet, two-thirds of Commonwealth Government drug strategy funding is spent on law enforcement.”

Directions Health believes decriminalisation of personal illicit drug use will lead to more people seeking treatment and produce significant societal benefits including: saving taxpayer dollars by reducing criminal recidivism; improving health, wellbeing and life outcomes; significantly reducing costs associated with the judicial process and incarceration; and reducing participants' future reliance on welfare and service supports.

Under the approach being proposed, administrative sanctions, such as a fine or other conditions, may still be imposed, and any illicit drugs found by police confiscated, but a person would not have a criminal record which may impact their future ability to gain employment or participate in other community activities. Manufacturing and sale of illicit substances would remain a criminal offence.

“This is about taking a health-first approach to personal drug use”, Ms Hendry said.

A full copy of the Directions Health Position Paper is available [here](#).

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