

Families Demand Change

International Family Drug Support Day 2024



MEDIA RELEASE

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Founder and CEO of Family Drug Support (FDS), Tony Trimmingham OAM, who started the organisation after the death of his son Damien 25 years ago to the day, said that it was now abundantly clear that the national drug policy debate was missing a critically important voice – **families**.

"When a family member is badly impacted by substance use, it can break you. It can break relationships. It can break families. Broken families weaken communities and are often hard to see, because we're all very good at hiding the issue. But Family Drug Support sees us. And it helps us hold it all together - our families, our relationships and our sanity. Our whole community is strengthened when families like mine get the support we need to get out of bed every day and live our lives as best as we can, despite the problems our loved ones are experiencing" - Teresa - Family Member

Mr Trimmingham added, *"It appears that everyone has a say on our current drug policies, including politicians, police, religious leaders and media commentators, yet families are too often left out of these discussions, despite being the people, along with the people using drugs, most affected by the current policies."*

"In our recent Voices to be Heard Survey of over 600 family members affected by someone else's drug and alcohol use, families were unambiguous about their deep dissatisfaction with the status quo regarding drug policy. This was especially the case with the zealotry of government to pursue the punitive responses rather than those of compassion, which are far more effective in reducing harm and exacerbating problems for families."

In looking at the results of the survey, families overwhelmingly support the following:

- Needle & syringe programs (87.5%)
- Pill testing services (85.7%)
- Pharmacotherapy (methadone, buprenorphine etc.) programs (86.3%)
- Medically supervised injecting centres (83.1%)
- Medicinal cannabis (83.9%)
- Prescription heroin programs (74.8%)

In addition, families wanted to see resources allocated to harm reduction strategies by a factor of almost 7:1 when compared to law enforcement strategies

The reality being experienced by families from the extraordinarily harmful legal consequences of drug use resulted in families overwhelmingly supporting the legalisation of cannabis and strongly supporting the decriminalisation of all currently illicit drugs.

Furthermore, it is also clear that families often try tough love approaches (60%) when trying to deal with drug and alcohol issues with family members but find them to be ineffective and problematic.

As a result, families become far more in favour of strategies that encourage connection and coping (86%), with as few as 10% continuing to support tough love approaches.

Mr Trimingham said – *“It is definitely time for these voices to be heard and for change to happen. Families are demanding reform and governments simply need to start listening”*

Mr Trimingham also wanted to thank the many sponsors and supporters that are helping with International Family Drug Support Day and supporting families.

For more information about International Family Drug Support Day please visit: [International Family Drug Support Day](#)

For further information, please contact:

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About Family Drug Support

- Established by Tony Trimingham in 1997, Family Drug Support (FDS) has contact with over 25,000 families every year.
- FDS provides 24/7 support (Phone: 1300 368186), education and information courses, online support and regular support groups in capital cities and a growing number of regional centres.
- For more information, visit: www.fds.org.au

FDS would like to thank our major sponsor:

