

WCTU E-Issues 2010

An email activism group of WCTU Australia Ltd.

99 Russell Street Melbourne, Vic.

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Submission to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy on the Consultation Draft, December 2010, of The National Drug Strategy 2010 -2015: A Framework for action on alcohol, tobacco, illegal and other drugs, by WCTU Australia Ltd (formerly the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia Ltd) and WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles Victoria.

WCTU is a non-profit, non-denominational women's organisation that has been working for over 120 years to reduce the harmful impact of alcohol and other drugs on our community.

We commend the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy on its Draft National Drug Strategy 2010 – 2015. In general it is well-considered and a good basis for drug policy for the next five years.

However, there are a number of areas which we would ask the Council consider further.

1. **Executive Summary** (P. 4) says that the overarching approach of harm minimisation, which has guided the National Drug Strategy since its inception in 1985 encompasses the three pillars of:
 - **Supply reduction** to prevent, stop, disrupt or otherwise reduce the production and supply of illegal drugs; and control, manage and/or regulate the availability of legal drugs.
 - **Demand reduction** to prevent the uptake and /or delay the onset of the use of alcohol. Tobacco, illegal and other drugs; reduce the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, illegal and other drugs in the community; and support people to recover from dependence and reintegrate with the community.
 - **Harm reduction** to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the misuse of drugs.

We agree that supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction do comprise a sensible three-pronged approach to drug policy. However, by calling the overarching policy Harm Minimisation, the emphasis is immediately thrown onto the third prong, harm reduction, at the expense of the more important harm prevention prongs of supply reduction and demand reduction. There is a place for harm reduction as there will be those who will use drugs in spite of the best policies, but WCTU considers that prevention is always more important and more effective than efforts to cure or minimise harm.

The public perception of the harm minimisation policy is that it is solely about how to take drugs as safely as possible, and ignores the supply reduction and demand reduction aspects. WCTU runs very effective and well-accepted school drug education programs but we sometimes encounter schools that believe that our program may not fit government guidelines because our emphasis is on prevention, although we include harm minimisation information such as the NHMRC low-risk drinking guidelines and demonstrate what a standard drink is.

We therefore consider that the Mission statement on page 5 should read:

“To build safe and healthy communities by preventing and minimising alcohol, tobacco, illegal and other drug-related health, social and economic harms among individuals, families and communities.”

2. The list of **‘harms from drug misuse’**, on page 6, illustrates something of the extent of the problems caused by drug use in our community. However, WCTU has an issue with the use of the term ‘misuse’ and also ‘abuse’ in this context and in many other places throughout the document.

For example, the first point lists “the cost to Australian society of alcohol, tobacco, illegal and other drug **misuse**...” Surely **any use** of illegal drugs is a cost to the community. Any tobacco **use** is harmful and leads to medical costs. Even moderate alcohol use can, and often does, lead to health problems and possible later misuse. So it is **use of drugs, not misuse of drugs** that is responsible for much of the \$56.1 billion costs.

Point 5 that mentions the harm caused by other drugs and substances that are legally available, talks of “the **abuse** of inhalants like petrol, paint and glue...” While the term ‘abuse’ in this context probably refers to using these substances for chroming rather than for their manufactured purposes, at a first reading the implication could be that one can sniff petrol, paint and glue safely if care is taken. It is the **use** of these substances for chroming that is the problem.

Many more examples of what we consider to be inappropriate use of the terms ‘misuse’ and ‘abuse’ can be found throughout the document and we would recommend that these be identified and replaced with ‘use’. Any use of illegal drugs is harmful and, by definition, illegal.

3. **The Pillars** (page 15)

- (a) **Supply reduction:** We commend the Ministerial Council on its statement that **“supply reduction strategies are directed towards enforcing the prohibition of illegal drugs and regulating and enforcing access to legal drugs including alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals and other drugs.”** We urge the Ministerial Council, and those charged with implementing its recommendations, to maintain this prohibition of illegal drugs and not to be influenced by those who seek to legalise them. Stricter enforcement of liquor licensing regulations is also necessary.

It goes on to say **that “The message must be clear that the supply and misuse of illegal drugs and the illegal supply and misuse of tobacco, alcohol, pharmaceuticals and other legal drugs is not acceptable.”** We agree, but this is another example of the misuse of the word ‘misuse’. The previous statement rightly speaks of the prohibition of illegal drugs so there can be no acceptable use of such drugs. Any use is misuse.

- (b) **Demand reduction:** The Draft Report comments (page 19) that **“no one strategy on its own can prevent and reduce the demand for drugs. Rather, broad-based, multidisciplinary and flexible strategies are needed to meet the many and varied needs of individuals and communities.”** It also says that, **“In general, preventing drug**

misuse can be more cost-effective than treating established drug problems“. WCTU agrees with these statements.

Alcohol is still by far the greatest problem drug in our community and it is important that action be taken now to change our binge drinking culture that is promoted in many subtle ways through media commentators as well as by direct advertising.

While the report does include **“explore and implement strategies that contribute to the development of a population culture that promotes healthy lifestyles”**, there is no indication of what such strategies would be. It is a difficult task to change culture and, as with most of the “Actions” listed, is a good idea whose implementation remains vague.

An action point (page 20) – **“Limit or prevent exposure to alcohol and tobacco advertising and promotion through a staged approach to regulation,”** picks up one of the recommendations of the **Preventative Health Taskforce** that asked for **“a staged approach to phase out alcohol promotions from times and placements that have high exposure to young people up to 25 years, including during live sports broadcasts, adolescent and child viewing times and sponsorship of sport.”** Unfortunately, the Federal Government’s response to this was negative, preferring to persist with the current voluntary ABAC Code that works for the benefit of alcohol companies instead of for the health of society. Alcohol advertising of sport, for example must be very worthwhile for sponsors and therefore effective in increasing consumption, as indicated by the amount that is spent (Sunday Age 29/08/09):

- In 2008 the alcohol industry spent more than \$106 million on advertising (not including the internet).
- Fosters spends \$20 million a year sponsoring AFL, NRL and cricket.
- Overall alcohol sponsorship of sport is estimated at \$60 to \$90 million a year.

If the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy is serious about reducing the uptake of alcohol, the WCTU urges it to persist with this very important action to reduce demand for alcohol by phasing out alcohol advertising. As noted at the bottom of page 19, **“For some drugs, such as tobacco, cultural acceptance has been successfully challenged, contributing to a significant reduction in use over many years. Harmful alcohol consumption, on the other hand, still remains a challenge.”** Tobacco advertising has gone. Alcohol advertising must be ended too.

The first paragraph under “Demand reduction” (page 19) says, “The demand for drugs can also be affected by their availability and affordability; which can, depending on the drug, be influenced through supply control, regulation and taxation.” This especially applies to alcohol consumption but doesn’t seem to be addressed in any of the “Actions”. Availability and price are two of the most effective and most easily implemented ways to reduce consumption and therefore reduce the problems it causes.

The connection between availability and an increase in alcohol-fuelled violence, for example, is clearly seen in Victoria where the number of liquor licences has skyrocketed from 3,200 in 1988 to over 19,000. The Victorian Government’s Liquor Control Advisory

Council in 2008 reported that the number of retail liquor stores had increased more than 60% in the past decade, to 1851 outlets.

Increasing the cost also reduces consumption. In spite of liquor industry propaganda to the contrary, the Federal Government figures show that increasing the tax on “alcopops” has led to Australians consuming per week, 3.45 million less standard drinks of all spirit-based products than before the tax increase. Unfortunately, the recommendation by the Preventative Health Taskforce for a review of all alcohol taxation has been rejected by the Federal Government because the wine industry is in a downturn due to overproduction. WCTU would urge the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy to recommend that the government introduces volumetric taxation of alcohol products with a surcharge on especially dangerous alcohol products.

Another demand reduction measure that is not specifically addressed in the Draft Report concerns **Secondary Supply to under-age teenagers**. It is an important measure to help to achieve Objective 1 (page 19) “**Prevent uptake and delay the onset of drug misuse**” (preferably **drug use**).

New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania currently have Secondary Supply laws making it illegal to serve alcohol to minors anywhere without parental/guardian consent. The Preventative Health Taskforce has recommended developing nationally consistent principles and practices regarding Secondary Supply to minors. Such laws, when publicised and enforced, empower parents to prevent others from giving alcohol to their young people if they do not agree, and empower young people to resist unwanted pressure to drink. The effect will be to delay the age at which many young people begin to drink. This is important in the light of evidence that the younger people start to drink the more likely they are to develop alcohol problems later in life and also the recent research showing the serious effect of alcohol on the teenage brain.

Objective 3 of demand reduction: Support people to recover from dependence and reconnect with the community (page 22). The emphasis in this section is on “recovery” and this is to be commended. It is interesting to note that there doesn’t appear to be a reference to current methadone programs for heroin addicts that, in effect, maintain a drug problem for users at great government expense. The second Action point on page 23 could well include consideration of the successful use of naltrexone implants by Dr George O’Neill in Western Australia, to wean heroin addicts off drugs altogether.

4. **In conclusion, the Successes of the National Drug Strategy since 1985**, listed on pages 11 and 12 are encouraging. However, there is much more to be achieved. It is the hope of the WCTU that the National Drug Strategy 2010 – 2015 will not be just a document of good ideas but will be speedily and vigorously translated into legislative action by the relevant governments around Australia so that we will become the healthiest country.

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Dear Friends,

Joy Butler is the World's WCTU Field Worker for Africa and works in Kenya. Please read her letter and then sign the petition for the elimination of violence against women. This is a shocking situation for countless girls and women.

Thank you,

Anne Bergen

E-Issues Director

Sent: Thursday, November 25, 2010 8:21 PM

Subject: International Day - ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dear friends

Today is the international day for remembering the hurting women of the world. It is **ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** day. I hope you will remember, pray for, support, find a way to help your sisters. Where I live in Africa there are thousands of women who suffer abuse, violence and cruelty of all kinds.

Today on the BBC news we have heard about DR Congolese women who work in mines and carry huge loads on their backs for many hours per week for only a few dollars. I know of young girls here in Kenya, not far from where I live, who are genitally mutilated and suffer unspoken agonies at the time they are cut and in marriage and in childbirth. Lots of young girls will remain at school this coming Christmas season to avoid the FGM primitive surgery and mutilation.

Last week I attended a women's event where I spoke to poor African women. They work hard to provide food for their children and many suffer beatings and hurt. Many looked sad and worn. My colleague and friend from Australia shared her story of abuse as a young bride. Her husband beat her and often tried to strangle her.

You will know of women in your community or church who suffer hurt in all kinds of ways. Let's do something to help - let's help to **END IT NOW**. <http://www.enditnow.org/>

God bless you as you open your heart to the hurting women today and indeed every day.

JOY BUTLER

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Dalgarno Institute which is a partner organization with WCTU has an online Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey at present. It would be great if you were able to go on line and complete the survey please, it takes only 5 minutes of your time (literally)! Use the link below.

<http://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/advocacy.html>

Thanks,

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Director

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Those who are finally appointed to govern our nation are trusted with great authority to decide and influence much of what happens in our nation. But the influence they have on us and the nation is not just what they decide, but how they do things and who they are.

God has called us to pray for those in authority. As we await the announcement of the new Federal Government we have the opportunity to pray for God to bring about His purposes in who leads our nation.

You may also like to sign the Canberra Declaration...



The many freedoms, advantages, opportunities, values and liberties which characterise Australia have their foundation on the teachings of Jesus and the Bible. The Judeo-Christian faith is unique in its inherent belief in the dignity of the human person as created in the image of God and the code of behaviour that flows from this belief. The Canberra Declaration declares that when Christian values are respected and allowed freedom of expression, not just confined to so-called sacred spaces but in the public arena as well, society is richer and healthier.

[Read the full Canberra Declaration](#)

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WCTU is a non-denominational organisation of Christians that is not allied to any political party and it is not our purpose to urge you to vote for any particular party. However, as Christians, we need to think carefully about how we vote in the Federal election on Saturday. Voting for the Senate is very important and can be confusing with the huge number of candidates and parties listed. The following email from Family Voice Australia may help you to sort out your Senate voting preferences. It is specifically related to NSW but will also apply generally. You could check the websites that are included. The Australian Electoral Commission website: <http://www.election.aec.gov.au> is also helpful.

Senate voting: where will your preferences go?

16 August 2010

Dear Friends,

Last week we sent you details of our federal election survey, now available on our website:

<http://www.fava.org.au/election-surveys/commonwealth/>

It's worth another look, as more Independent candidates have sent us their replies to our ten key questions. The official Labour reply scored 58; Liberal/Nationals Coalition scored 64; the Greens scored just 23. The official replies from pro-family parties CDP, Family First and DLP all scored 100.

Many people have thanked us for the detailed information on candidates in each House of Representatives electorate. "I didn't realise how many different people were standing in my marginal seat," one supporter told us. "Your survey helped me get a feel for their views and work out how to number my preferences next Saturday!"

We have fixed a couple of glitches in the list of NSW Senate candidates. If you want to vote below the line for the Senate, you can now print out our survey page which lists the names and scores of candidates in the same order they will appear on your white Senate ballot paper. You can decide your preferred order (1-84!) before you go to the polling booth on Saturday.

But people often tell us that numbering 84 different squares is too hard. They just want to put a "1" in the box above their favourite party.

That's fine if you agree with your party's preference deals with other candidates. These preference deals tell you a lot about what your party really thinks. You can find the Senate group preference tickets on the Australian Electoral Commission website:

<http://www.aec.gov.au/election/downloads.htm#gvt>

Below is a brief summary of some party preference tickets. You may be in for a shock:

The Labour party has done a preference deal with the Greens. In NSW, this means if you vote "1" above the line for Labour in the Senate, your Labour vote could end up supporting a Greens candidate – who will oppose prayers in parliament, man-woman marriage, school chaplains, fairness in childcare funding and ISP filtering while supporting a

bill of rights. Labour has preferenced the Australian Sex Party (pro-porn, pro-prostitution) behind CDP and DLP, but ahead of the Liberals, and well ahead of Family First, with One Nation last.

A vote above the line for the Greens will send your next preferences to Independents including Cheryl Kernot, then the Secular Party (atheist), Socialist Alliance, Communists, the Australian Sex Party, Labour, Liberals - then Family First, CDP and One Nation last.

If you vote above the line for the Liberal/Nationals Coalition, your next preference will go to the CDP, then Family First, ending up with the Australian Sex Party almost at the end after Labour, with the Secular Party and One Nation last.

A vote above the line for the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) will send your next preference to the Liberal/Nationals Coalition, then Family First, DLP, Labour in the middle, with the Australian Sex Party and the Greens last.

A vote above the line for Family First will send your preferences to the Coalition, then DLP, CDP, Labour in the middle, with the Australian Sex Party and the Greens last.

A vote above the line for the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) will go to One Nation, Family First, CDP, Coalition, Labour, with the Australian Sex Party and the Greens last.

It's your choice – vote above the line if you agree with your party's preference flows. If not, join me in voting below the line – and remember you can always ask for a new ballot paper if you make a mistake.

God bless!

David

Dr David Phillips

National President,

Family Voice Australia

Phone: 1300 365 965

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Our **Federal Elections** will be held some time in the next few months so this is an appropriate time to contact your local Member of the House of Representatives by email or letter and ask some questions such as:

1. Would you be in favour of restricting Alcohol Advertising as a first move to eventually abolishing all advertising of alcohol?
2. Would you support ending all alcohol sponsorship of sport and other activities? (giving due notice so that replacement sponsors could be found)
3. Would you work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the "National Preventative Health Taskforce Report, Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020", which recommends ways to address obesity, smoking and alcohol misuse in our community?

Contact details for MPs are easily found by typing "Parliament of Australia" into your browser or following the following links:

[House of Representatives](#)
[Senate](#)

Victorian State Elections will also be held later this year so if you live in Victoria it would be good to contact your local Members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council to ask them the following:

1. Would you support any move to change the Victoria Liquor Act to allow local government to effectively object to the granting of liquor licenses to additional venues?
2. Would you support a Secondary Supply Law, such as is operating in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania, being introduced into Victoria to fine adults who supply liquor to under-age youth without their parents' permission?
3. As "P"-Plate drivers must have a Zero BAC, would you support Zero (or .02%) as the standard for all drivers?
4. Would you support raising the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 because of recent research showing that the brain is not properly developed until people are in their early twenties, and the damaging effect of alcohol on the prefrontal area of the developing brain that is responsible for good judgement, thinking, planning, decision-making and impulse control?

State MP contact details can be found by typing Parliament of Victoria into your browser or following the following links:

[Legislative Assembly](#)
[Legislative Council](#)

Thank you for your action.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Director