



*4<sup>th</sup> of March, 2022*

Hi there,

It's going to be a big week. A vote on my legislation to reduce the harm caused by drugs is scheduled for Wednesday.

The Bill to expanding existing diversion options to all people apprehended for use and/or possession of small quantities of drugs presents my colleagues in the Victorian Parliament with a clear choice.

They can elect to continue to support a policy proven to kill people and waste taxpayers' money.

Or they can elect to adjust the policy by introducing a measure proven to save lives and scarce public funds, curb crime, reduce illness and disability, slash incarceration and put people with problematic drug use into treatment and on the road to recovery.



**Rational, not radical**

Mirroring the approach that has proved so successful in the increasing number of jurisdictions adopting it around the world, my Bill treats problematic drug use as a health issue, not a something best dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Victoria Police have indicated support for this, as they have seen the benefits when they use their discretionary powers to divert drug users into treatment rather than court and, so often, prison.

Prohibition, the 'war on drugs', has proved a disaster over half a century. More people die of preventable overdoses than of road trauma. Many more lives are ruined. Organised criminals cash in.



## Fear and loathing on the campaign trail

Every lawmaker who sits in that place with me knows the evidence is overwhelming and abundant. They cannot credibly claim to be unaware of it.

It now just needs politicians to do the right thing. They know, and privately admit, prohibition is one of the most dreadful failures in modern political history. But they are hesitant to support it, given the fear and misunderstanding that has accompanied prohibition.

There's much undue fear based on a misconception of what 'decriminalisation' means. Here's an explanation from our campaign website, [decrim.com.au](http://decrim.com.au)

*Decriminalisation does not mean legalisation – decriminalisation is the removal of criminal penalties for specific offences. When we talk about decriminalisation of drug use or possession, we are talking about removal of penalties for those*

*offences, but not offences like drug trafficking, manufacture, or supply.*

*It's a way of reducing harm, as are diversion programs, safe-injecting spaces, needle exchanges, and narcotic substitutes.*

*Decriminalisation advocates do not assert using drugs is OK. Drugs are dangerous. Supporters of decriminalisation accept the evidence showing treating problematic drug use as a health problem, not a criminal one, is the most effective and efficient way to reduce harm to health and wellbeing.*

One of the Alcohol and Other Drugs sector leaders, [First Step](#) treatment and support clinic CEO Patrick Lawrence explains it beautifully, in 60 seconds, [here](#).



If you support the change and have not yet visited the site, it would be great were you to go there and spend 30 seconds (literally) adding your name and urging your elected representatives to consider voting for it.



## **A change everyone can embrace**

People with problematic drug use often desperately need help, not more harm. That's not a party-political notion. Surely it is a clear route to bipartisanship. This is a policy adjustment in the public interest.

Fiscal conservatives can embrace compulsory diversion to treatment and support because it saves and/or better deploys taxpayers' money. It is more efficient and effective. It allows law enforcement to go after organised criminals. And because it saves and improves lives.

Social progressives can embrace it because it saves and improves lives.... And because it would save and/or better deploy taxpayers' money...



## **A very reasonable electoral rollout**

In coming days, we'll be announcing exciting news about our Senate ticket in Victoria. We have a fabulous ticket to add to the formidable and growing list of Federal candidates. In recent days, we've announced the NSW team:



## Jane Caro for NSW



Jane Caro AM is a Walkley Award winning Australian columnist, author, novelist, broadcaster, documentary maker, feminist and social commentator. She spent 35 years as an award-winning copywriter and 7 years teaching Advertising Creative in the School of Communication Arts at Western Sydney University.

Caro is a well-known activist for many causes; particularly feminism, public education, the plight of older women, urgent action on climate change, our treatment of refugees, Indigenous Australians and anyone

who is routinely excluded, marginalized or unjustly treated. She has expressed her activism for decades via her columns, frequent appearances in the media and her books, both fiction and non-fiction.

## Hannah Maher for NSW



Hannah Maher is Jane's running mate. She's from regional NSW – specifically, Trundle, a country town in the central west of NSW, with a population of 300.

She says: “We need to change the narrative around climate change in the bush. Country people can see it happening first hand, and many of them are already adopting sustainable farming methods. I think

many are disillusioned with the Nationals, who do not work in the best interest of the land.”

Hannah has wide interests. As a trans woman, her work at a leading health promotion organisation specialising in HIV prevention and support dovetails

with her commitment to inclusive service provision of healthcare, aged care and domestic. They join...

## Ron Williams for Qld



I'll be joining Ron at the Noosa Rainbow River Parade this Sunday. It will be a poignant time to see first-hand the effects of the catastrophic flooding that community and so many others on the eastern seaboard are suffering in an extreme weather event experts all over the world believe to be associated with global warming.

The costs of inaction on climate change are clearly, as many had been warning, far greater than those of expediting the transition to renewable energy.



## And so, to the vote

And the costs of inaction on drug policy are also unconscionable. The case for change is compelling. The chance for change is right here, right now.

Thanks,

**Fiona .**

