

Big push is on for heroin 'shooting galleries' in Australia

by Robert Barwick

Australia is locked in a fierce debate over proposals to establish legal heroin injecting rooms, or "shooting galleries," in the cities of Sydney, Melbourne, and the nation's capital, Canberra. The George Soros-funded pro-drug legalization lobby in Australia has captured the drug policy agendas of the state Labor Party governments of Premier Bob Carr in New South Wales (N.S.W.), and newly elected Premier Steve Bracks in Victoria: The Carr government is proposing an 18-month shooting gallery "trial" in the notorious Kings Cross red light district of Sydney, while Bracks is planning to set up five shooting galleries in the most severe drug crisis spots in Melbourne. In Canberra, local Health Minister Mike Moore on Dec. 9 approved a two-year trial shooting gallery.

The impetus for the shooting galleries is what has been described as a heroin "epidemic" sweeping Australia. According to the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, deaths from heroin overdoses in 1998 jumped 23%, to 737, the highest number ever; this was up from 600 in 1997, and 347 in 1988. Of the deaths, 77.1% were in the largest states of N.S.W. and Victoria, which are flirting with the shooting galleries proposals; Western Australia, which maintains a hard-line anti-drug policy, recorded the only fall in heroin overdose deaths.

The shooting gallery initiatives are being entirely run by Australia's small, but very vocal, pro-dope lobby and media. In N.S.W., Carr and his Special Minister of State John Della Bosca, who are the main movers behind the push, are both longtime assets of billionaire media mogul Kerry Packer, whose *Bulletin* magazine, Channel 9 television network, and *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* newspapers have been beating the drug legalization drum for many years. Packer himself was the subject of a drug-trafficking investigation in the early 1980s, which was shut down by the Labor Party.

In Victoria, Bracks's first initiative upon election in October was to resurrect the Premier's Drug Advisory Council, set up by his predecessor Jeff Kennett, and to ask its chairman, Dr. David Penington, to oversee the shooting galleries. Penington attempted to legalize marijuana in 1996, but was defeated by an anti-drug mobilization led by the Citizens Electoral Council, a national political party allied with American Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche.

In Canberra, the dope lobby *is* the government: Health Minister Moore is a longtime front-man for the George Soros-funded Drug Policy Foundation, and a leading advocate of Soros's other pet project—euthanasia.

Fierce opposition

However, the proposals are meeting fierce opposition: Senior lawyer Peter Faris denounced the shooting galleries in the Dec. 17 *Australian* newspaper on behalf of a lobby group for inner city Melbourne residents: "Why is it that we want to legitimize a heroin industry in the central business district?" he demanded. "I cannot understand what our city fathers are on about." In late October, the Catholic Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome expressly forbade the Sisters of Charity order of nuns from accepting Carr's request that they run N.S.W.'s first shooting gallery trial. This followed an intensive letter-writing campaign to the Pope from concerned citizens, and put the time frame for the commencement of the trial back many months; the ultra-liberal Uniting Church, which has stepped forward to conduct the trial, is also split over the issue.

Most significantly, on Nov. 17, the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board wrote to the Australian Ambassador to the UN in Vienna, advising that the proposed heroin injection room trial in N.S.W. was in breach of Australia's international treaty obligations. "The Board maintains its position that permission or tacit consent given by any national, state, or local authority for the establishment and operation of injection rooms or shooting galleries is contrary to the international drug control conventions," INCB President Antonio Martins warned (see *Documentation*). Australian Prime Minister John Howard seized on the letter to express his own reservations about the trials, and directed the states to desist from their plans until the federal and state governments have considered all the implications.

The pro-dopers blasted Howard: N.S.W.'s Della Bosca bluntly told him that his intervention was "unwelcome and ill-informed," and Victoria's Dr. Penington dismissed the INCB as irrelevant, and a bunch of "zealots" in the war on drugs. "My view is that it has nothing to do with them," he said. Unfortunately, Howard's apparent anti-drug stance has

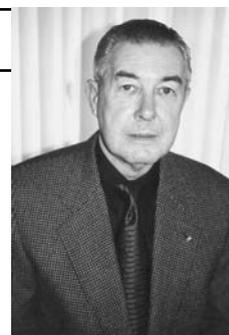
been undermined by his savage cuts to law enforcement, and by the composition of his own 14-person panel of appointed drug advisers, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), 11 of whom are known pro-legalization advocates, including Soros operative Tony Trimmingham (see interview with Tony Wood which follows). On Dec. 16, the ANCD released a statement, saying that the “ANCD would be supportive of any proven intervention that reduces drug use *and related harm*” (emphasis added). Although the chairman of the ANCD, Salvation Army Maj. Brian Watters, in the past has been vigorously opposed to any softening of drug laws, sources report that he has come under pressure from other Salvation Army officers who are supportive of shooting galleries, as well as several large financial contributors to the Salvation Army, who have threatened to withhold money unless he changes his hard-line position.

In fact, charities are leading the push to establish the shooting galleries, which is not unrelated to the large, tax-free donations they receive from large banks and foundations— institutions which have long bankrolled the drug-legalization campaign in Australia. For example, the Melbourne charity Open Family earlier this year threatened to open a shooting gallery illegally; an *EIR* investigation revealed that its board was stacked by known pro-drug financial interests, including ANZ Nominees, a slush fund for one of Australia’s oldest and dirtiest banks, the ANZ, which was based in London until 1976.

On Dec. 12, yet another pro-doper came out of the political closet, when federal opposition Labor Party leader Kim Beasley announced his personal support for “safe” heroin-injecting rooms—the highest level endorsement ever received for the drug legalization agenda in Australia.

Interview: Tony Wood

The fight for a zero-tolerance drug policy in Australia



Tony Wood and his wife Angela are staunch anti-drug campaigners in Australia, who took up the anti-drug fight when their 15-year-old daughter Anna died from a bad reaction to an Ecstasy tablet four years ago. Anna Wood’s death received widespread publicity, and Tony and Angela were courted by the George Soros-funded pro-drug legalization lobby in Australia to become their spokesmen. Because the Woods were vociferously anti-legalization, the recruitment attempt failed, and the Soros lobby turned to Tony Trimmingham, a divorced marriage guidance counselor, whose son Damien had died from a heroin overdose in a back alley in Sydney three years ago, to be their “grieving parent” spokesman instead. As the head of Family and Friends for Drug Law Reform, a Soros front, Trimmingham is regularly wheeled out to comment to the media about the necessity for softening the drug laws. Trimmingham is scheduled to be a featured speaker at a Jan. 13-14 conference in Seattle, Washington, entitled “Preventing Heroin Overdoses: A Pragmatic Approach,” which is sponsored by the George Soros-funded Lindesmith Center. Robert Barwick interviewed Tony Wood on Dec. 6 to get the other side of the drug debate in Australia.

EIR: What prompted you to become an anti-drug campaigner?

Wood: It happened when our daughter died, actually, just a little over four years ago. We didn’t need any prompting—we just fell into it, it wasn’t as if anything happened one way or the other. Not long after Anna died from taking a single Ecstasy tablet—it wasn’t an overdose, these tablets just kill people at random, we don’t know why—Anna was diagnosed with hypotremia, that’s what she died of, caused by taking one single Ecstasy tablet. From there, as a family we were contacted by people like Dr. Alex Wodak, who tried to recruit us to his way of thinking, that we needed drastic changes here in Australia, inasmuch as if we legalized all drugs, we wouldn’t be having this problem. I believe, and as a family, we believe, that Anna would have died whether the drug was legal, or illegal—it makes no difference, drugs are still dangerous.

From there on, the media picked up on Anna, and it started a whole new life for us. I’ve still got to work, obviously, to pay the bills at home, but there’s a lot of this anti-drug work going on. My wife spends her entire time talking at schools, and has spoken at more than 300 schools Australia-wide—from Tasmania, to Perth, through Western Australia, right up through Queensland (I think the only two places she hasn’t been in are South Australia and the Northern Territory). But we’re finding that drug use among our children is just escalat-