

## VAC mourns the loss of passionate harm reduction giant Jenny Kelsall

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 January 2018 - Longstanding advocate for harm reduction approaches to drug use, Jenny Kelsall, passed on Saturday marking the loss of a dedicated community leader with an extensive career that contributed to the development of programs and services that support the community response to HIV and other blood borne viruses.

Most recently, Jenny served as the Executive Officer for Harm Reduction Victoria where she encouraged safer drug use and empowered drug users to find solutions and strategies for the better part of the past decade. Prior to that, she served for several years as part of a multi-discipline research team at the Burnet Institute, a team who was the first to identify a hepatitis C epidemic among people who inject drugs in Australia.

Having worked closely with Jenny over the years, VAC President Chad Hughes was saddened by the news and acknowledged her incredible contribution.

“Jenny was completely dedicated to the people she served. She committed herself tirelessly to ensuring evidence based harm reduction was available to people who use drugs both here in Victoria, and elsewhere. She was incredibly bright and steadfast in her advocacy fighting for the health and welfare rights of the community,” he said.

“She demonstrated how, by opening her heart and making personal sacrifices, she could make a tremendous contribution that benefited the lives of many. I’m a better person for knowing her — as are countless others.”

Her legacy includes an incredible portfolio of peer-based research and education initiatives across Australia and Asia in the areas of HIV, viral hepatitis & injecting drug use spanning over nearly three decades.

VAC CEO Simon Ruth said, “Jenny’s legacy serves as a reminder of the strength of a community-led response in the face of Herculean challenges such as HIV and viral hepatitis. Her collaborative approach ceaselessly worked toward bringing drug law and national policies in line with public health objectives.”

ENDS

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