

Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance

Seminar Series 2009

Thursday 17 September 2009

What (if any) are the “Policy Lessons” of National Prohibition in the USA 1920-1933?

Presented by Professor Wayne Hall

Seminar Abstract

“Everyone knows” that national alcohol prohibition in the USA between 1920 and 1933 was a misguided quixotic social experiment that made alcohol problems worse and was widely disregarded by most Americans, creating a large black market for alcohol, contributing to the development of organised crime in the USA and increasing crime. Because it was such a manifold and manifest failure, prohibition was repealed in 1933. The standard view provides the basis for “policy lessons” that are routinely invoked in policy debates about alcohol and other drugs. Such “lessons” are invoked by the alcohol industry in resisting any proposals to reduce the availability, increase the price of alcohol, or regulate alcohol advertising and promotion. My purposes in this paper are: to provide a more accurate account of alcohol prohibition that is informed by historical and econometric analyses; to describe the policy debates in the 1920s and 1930s about the effectiveness of national prohibition; and to reflect on what, if any, relevance the US experience with alcohol prohibition has for contemporary debates about policies towards alcohol.

About the Speaker

Wayne Hall is an NHMRC Australia Fellow and Professor of Public Health Policy in the School of Population Health, University of Queensland (since 2004). He was formerly Director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW (1994-2001) and Professor and Director of the Office of Public Policy and Ethics at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland (2001-2004). He has been an expert adviser to the World Health Organization on drug dependence since 1993, a member of the Australian National Council on Drugs (1998-2001) and Chair of the Drug Utilisation Subcommittee of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee. In 2003 he was identified by the Institute for Scientific Analysis as a highly cited author in the “social sciences general”. He is currently researching the public health policy and ethical implications of genetic and neuroscience research on drug use and addiction.

Thursday 17 September 2009

12:30pm - 2:00pm

Mt Gravatt Campus, Building M10 Social Sciences, Level 5, Room 5.01

Light refreshments served on arrival.

RSVP preferred - please email kceljag-events@griffith.edu.au or phone 3735 5997 by Tuesday 15 September 2009.