

# 'Time has come' for jail after guilty plea to drugs charges

By Natasha Rudra

A chef has been jailed for a year on drug possession charges after a magistrate suggested "the time had come" for him to receive a prison term.

Hung Trieu Thoung, 48, had pleaded guilty to charges of possessing methylamphetamine and heroin.

He had also been accused of possessing stolen property and selling heroin near the ACT Legislative Assembly. But those charges were dropped yesterday.

The court heard Thoung was on bail for one of the offences when he committed the second offence in April this year. He was also subject to a good-behaviour order in the Supreme Court for another drug offence.

Thoung was arrested in March at the Owen flats in Lyncham, when police officers saw him trying to shove a cipseal bag of methylamphetamine down his trousers. He was on bail for that offence when he was caught in possession

of 0.2g of heroin in Civic a month later. Thoung's LegalAid lawyer argued his client had accepted the bag of methylamphetamine from a friend after becoming stressed over an inspection of his public housing property.

He had taken the heroin after becoming stressed over his job at a Charnwood restaurant.

The prosecution argued the case against Thoung was overwhelming and the man had shown continued disobedience for the law.

Magistrate Grant Lalor said Thoung had been given numerous chances to rehabilitate but failed them all and would be a problem for the community until he was drug-free.

"In my view the time has come for this defendant to receive a full-time jail term for his offences," he said.

Mr Lalor sentenced Thoung to a total of 12 months jail backdated to June 28 to account for time already spent in custody. He committed the man to the Supreme Court for the breach of his good-behaviour order.

mind would not want others to help them stick needles containing dangerous mind-altering toxic substances into their body.

Certainly not when governments know there are proven alternatives to allow them to kick the habit.

Those not in full health and sound of mind, specially if prison inmates, provide even stronger ethical grounds for governments to be proactive in quickly rehabilitating them to normal lives.

Hales seeks evidence to support ethical arguments. Well, here is one. Hepatitis C is the main argument for putting needles in the AMC.

About 30 years ago there were an estimated 30,000 hep C sufferers in Australia. Since then around 500 million needles have been released into the community - in Victoria alone, six million annually.

Today we have almost 250,000 hep C sufferers. On any grounds, ethical or not, that blows the ACT Government's proposal for needles in the AMC out of the water.

Colliss Parrett, Barton

## Needle exchange

Colin Hales (Letters, August 9) is correct in suggesting those who oppose needles in the Alexander Maconochie Centre do so on the basis of morals and ethics.

My approach is based on the millennia-old moral directive "Do unto others as you would..."

Anyone in normal health and sound

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