

Inquiry into the use of Cannabis in Victoria

Mr Stefan Lodewyckx

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this Inquiry into the use of Cannabis in Victoria to consider::

Accessing and using cannabis, Young people and children, Public health, Public safety, Education, Criminal activity, Mental health, Social impacts

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

Individual

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

Select all that apply. Do you think there should be restrictions on the use of cannabis? :

Personal use of cannabis should be decriminalised.

(Decriminalised: there are no criminal or civil penalties instead a person is referred to a drug diversion program or other health/ treatment service), Personal use of cannabis should be legal. , Sale of cannabis should be legal and regulated. , Cultivation of cannabis for personal use should be legal., Other – please explain.

Cannabis use should be considered within a holistic framework of drug policy that encourages health interventions for susceptible people, reduces harm as realistically possible, and doesn't inadvertently make things worse.

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the use of cannabis in Victoria. I come from the perspective of a somewhat younger person in my early 30s who does not routinely use illicit drugs and favours an evidence-based approach to drugs policy.

While I have used cannabis infrequently, I have not done so for at least 8–9 years. However, many people I know use it socially and it is not unusual during gatherings for a small group to temporarily break outside to smoke. I feel that this is a similar experience to many people in my age group.

My main contention is that the Committee should be pragmatic in terms of what they wish to achieve, based on Victorian drug policy up to now.

I do not believe that it will be possible to fully prevent young people or children accessing cannabis, regardless of whether it is ever fully legalised. If the aim of a successful drugs policy is to prevent harm, I believe that attention should be brought to de-stigmatising cannabis to remove social barriers for seeking help. Part of this process should, in my opinion, rely on education programmes that offer tangible advice grounded in realistic expectations.

As someone in my early 30s, I experienced numerous drug education campaigns growing up, only to find that the lived experience of people using cannabis in the real world did not, by and large, bear resemblance

to the catastrophisation narrative to which we have all become familiar.

We must not discount the potential for cannabis to cause enormous damage, but I feel that must be situated within the context of millions of Australians using it without incident every day. For a young person, I fear that this disconnect between messaging and reality may cause the central thesis to unwittingly delegitimise other points that may prove crucial to reducing harm.

I have three recommendations for the inquiry.

First, drug education programmes should not ignore the inevitability that some of their audience will consume cannabis.

Second, drug education programmes should work to guide the small number of users and their peers who do consume cannabis to do so as safely as possible; help them identify warning signs early.

Decriminalisation of cannabis (at least of personal quantities) should proceed to make it easier for problem users to access services without fear of adverse consequences.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Stefan Lodewyckx