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Submission to parliament enquire into the use of cannabis by Daniel Roa

Since the Submissions for such a former-controversial but important topic are so numerous, I succinctly synthesised my experience in order to make this reading as simple as it may be meaningful and useful for your purposes, however if there is any request to further clarify or explore what is written below, I authorised the competent governmental body or person to contact me.

Some background

I am 29 years old, I migrated from my natal Colombia to Australia in 2011, at NSW precisely when I was 20. I did never smoke marijuana before arriving in Australia, I move to Victoria 3 years ago due constant hallucination such as "hearing voices" that give you commands or having fixed beliefs e.g. reassuring that a powerful being was controlling my intestines from the moon. Symptoms that later were translated to a diagnosis of schizophrenia, it by 2018. Fortunate enough I was put under the Mental Health Act for 6 months then leading to 2 years voluntary treatment and successful recovery of my brain (or remediation of the illness) before being discharge from The Alfred hospital, finishing a journey for which I have more praising than complains

My encounter with cannabis

Once I settled in Sydney, it was striking. To live among the Australian progressive culture an environment at least far apart of the conservatism I was used to in Colombia, namely the laws over women own bodies, the open acceptance of colourful sexual preferences and so on, all this was liberating in many senses. Contextualizing, the open use of illicit drugs and its soft stigmatisation was astonishing, suddenly I was integrated in environments where smoking cannabis was the new normal, a very common practice among young, old, rich or poor people, doubtlessly a habit that unites and create micro communities. Indeed, I saw it as an open hypocrisy, how this has not yet been regulated, instead it is illegal and its everywhere. that is just an average perspective from an insider of this world who also asserts that noticeably, besides the efforts of the police and enforcement bodies, no acquaintance did ever experience any shortage of supply.

The problems, my problems, the public problem

I was a super light consumer, perhaps I did not have to buy it for myself, by this I do not want to excuse myself of never have done a shadowy transaction, do not get me wrong, I pretend to signify that my friends were please with my company because I was not utilising much of their stuff, my lungs just needed to smoke a tinny puff to intensely affect my brain, I required not even a fifth of a lazy inhalation, that was more than enough to make me see fractals, have paranoia, hear echoes and disabled me to the point to lose my speech. hence, **emphatically I state, that there is not enough research, either public education of the primary symptoms of psychosis the main feature that leads to schizophrenia** A mental disorder that in my case is already triggered.

Legal or Illegal

I feel not disdain for the arduous and well intentioned labour of the enforcement corpuses, that fight narcotraffic in order to maintain a healthy prosperous society, but the true is, drugs had been there and will be always there, similar to the subject of prostitution, or sex in the Tudor era, it cannot be controlled by laws that prevent citizen of its access. These old morals have been engrained in an apparatus of power creating by-products such as fixations and fetishizes of anything slightly “immoral”, a perpetuating the social unconscious which just shines light by producing laws if there is political gain, not base on evidence, history or science. hypocrisy. As gay marriage, which was not made conscious (legal) for the society because prior lack of popular support that in turn, breakthrough moments are only endorsed onto the society by role models, leaders, or politicians. Australia is not far behind, my hope is to materialise the change to regulate cannabis better that any other nation.

Won't somebody think of the children!

In my school when I was a kid around 11, we were taught to not use drugs, this under the US created program Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) deployed by the local police in a Colombian town. I do not undermine they efforts, but critically, personally and **scientifically proven** it is a failure (see Timothy D. Wilson research). We were given books to be filled, coloured and so on, the DARE classes were every week for a year, we got on well with the instructor, a policeman Mr Carreño, I cannot wish to have paid more attention, I wish to not have attended at all and have built my own concept of what drugs are, specially weed. Whether the plant is lawful or not, a psychological tested method need to be implemented into schools calendars to protect our young community from the inappropriate use of any harmful substance, this need to be delegated to a research institutions like a University in order to collect data so it can be compared years later, this leads to results that improve the methodology of teaching and help to take better decisions but most important **it saves money!** It is imperative to openly disclose the subject as something that eventually will come into the minors life, do not filled them with fear, because once they discover what they miss, and how wrong they are about its concept they will change their approach and if Snoop dog can, why so I cannot ?

My personal take away

Among many unknown reasons of the schizophrenia the use of cannabis is a triggering well-known cause by mental health practitioners. as a fact 3% of the population experience psychosis at some stage, but just 1% develops schizophrenia, therefore there is already 1% of the people in Victoria unaware that a mental disorder will be triggered if they are exposed to some yet unknow factors such as quantity of Cannabis. This should not stop the process of legalization, perhaps should activate a robust scheme of research and education of early stages of recognition of Psychosis, so the user will identify when is at risk

Why it should be legal

- Legality will allow handling of cannabis by professionals to carry on research in the myriad of possible ways, pinpointing benefits, and drawback of the cannabis use, possibly leading to new psychiatric alternatives
- Strengthening of the economy. there is no need to go deep into the subject, boost of employment, tourism etc.
- Users safety means quality of the product, the legalization must bring standards of production quality, nowadays the illegality of the plant has created a risks for the users since chemicals and other enhancing drugs are sprayed over the product.
- It will bring a window to also make more public the causes of psychosis and schizophrenia bringing down stigma whilst keeping inform and safe the public
- It will hugely strength the Victorian institutions and impact profoundly the black market
- The legalization of cannabis can set a motto to also legalise drugs like cocaine, this process of prudent legislation base in economic an scientific research could blend laws in the market that eradicate the narcotraffic and indeed sustain an improvement of overall wellbeing population, the misconception that legalization could bring chaos will soon be finish, instead it should replace and remediate the already existence of the issue, Australia will have a new cultural factor will is appropriated in all senses.

Propositions

- Research need to be held of the use of cannabis and its effects when is mixed with other drugs and substances such as alcohol, “party pills”, nicotine Etc.
- As the cigarettes the product must be labelled with information of how to recognise psychosis or possible early stages of schizophrenia (do not undermine the meaning of this symptoms, by experience they are difficult to recognise unless there is an appropriated and precise public information, just paranoia itself is a complex feature) recalling just a few: paranoia, hearing echoes or voices, lost of speech, plain mood, perturbances in the sleep, random euphoria, extreme disorganization, restlessness or hyperactivity and disorganized speech also called word salad.
- The different strains of cannabis should be evaluated and marked separately by its quantity of psychoactive chemicals, as alcohol the consumer needs to be informed in the packaging a percentage or strength of the substance to be consume.
- Cannabis as a transitional treatment to rehabilitation to leave dependence, alleviate and diminish risks from other “hard drugs” as heroin, speed etc. It has been proven effective when it comes to remediate the abstinence syndrome cause by the absence of intense drugs to use cannabis, it was implement as a pilot in 2013 by Gustavo Petro mayor of the capital city of Bogota by that time, having positive impacts besides the immense opposition.
- Inclusion of a sophisticated tested program of drugs abuse prevention at schools and universities, science backed, that projects itself to the collection and analysis of data for self-modification and improvement of the program efficiency
- As cigarettes the taxation must be substantial to not cause destabilization to the social welfare, it is unstoppable the tendency of the broad population of causing harm to themselves, the use of cannabis also cause dependency, exacerbates anxiety and

psychological issues for a relative small percentage of the population, the taxes should be invested to help those persons that statistically always will be affected regardless legality of the substance.

- Banned the use of pesticides needed for GMO strains of cannabis, as was proven in France the use of GMO plantations imply the use of specific pesticides among other chemical that are used by an induced mercantile dependence that besides monopolise and damage the economy, produce negative effects in the consumers health as one research in question linked pesticides with cancer in lab mice.
- Make unlawful the importation of GMO or patented seed. It is to avoid the wrongdoing that happened in Colombia. The importation of GMO rice seeds broke virtually the whole national rice production sector since companies abroad cunning dishonestly introduced seeds initially free or at a very low price. Seeds that later were used as traditionally farming has always been done in Colombia, by manually selecting the seeds for the next season. with farmers and peasants unaware that the multinationals as Monsanto would be legally able to sue them for reuse the seeds, which never openly informed the public that it holds a patent registered in USA that in turn could bring legal issues. A trap.
- More research must be done about peer pressure, peer pressure is one of the main causes that not necessarily push people to use substances, I argue that rather it smoothly persuade individuals to be initiated in them, it is a complex subject that needs to be handle to professional social-psychologist able to create tools to be use by youngster so they have more control in situation, boundaries ETC
- Strictly prohibit advertisement. The are rationally and logically rooted arguments, there is so much we ignore about cannabis however doubtlessly it is a substance that should be taken with more serious precautions than tabaco always and forever. We need to keep the easy suggestible individuals safe, to not be lure by advertisement which main purpose is to trick our minds, creating needs, or triggering us to spend money. It is criminal to use the state of art of sophisticated publicity techniques on people and make them drug themselves in exchange of money. However, proven the maximum pressure measures in narcotraffic, is critical that once aware the parliament of the matter, could be far more criminal if the government do not exert they powers to regulate a market that has long been there in possession of criminals.

Kindly thanks for your attention, in quality to help,

Daniel Roa

