

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the use of Cannabis in Victoria

Mr Jake Russell

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I do not come from a professional background, i am a father of two beautiful children, I was born in Victoria and moved to Queensland at the age of 8. I have worked as a cook since the age of 14, my name is Jake Russell and i am 26 years old.

My mothers name is Colleen Clelland, growing up she had always drank socially, never problematicly, after a troublesome divorce and a rough period everything changed, around the time i was 12 she became severely depressed this depression led to her drinking heavily, around the time I was 15 she attempted to take her life by overdose of prescription drugs, she almost succeeded. She called me one night a few months before her attempt and told me she had been drink driving and had possibly ran over someone and had drove off, this had happened near my friends that i was staying at and we went to check if anyone was hurt, upon arriving to where she thought she was we found nothing, we decided to walk around the neighborhood and eventually came across a smashed fence on the side on the road, there was an oil trail a few meters from the fence so my friends and i followed the trail, it went for almost a kilometer until it arrived at my mothers house and down the driveway where her car was parked. We realised immediately that she had hit a fence and not a person. The next day she went and paid for the fence and the police were never involved. After the attempted suicide she was in the mental health section of the hospital getting help for her depression. This was possibly the first time i had seen any sense of my real mum in years.

I've chosen to tell this story not because it had the biggest impact on my life, but because it very well could have.

If the police had been contacted when she hit the fence i dont know what would have happened, she likely would have lost her license, she worked in childcare she would have lost her job, she would have faced penalties from the courts and given her recent period of suicide attempts, i beleive it would have resulted in her successfully taking her life.

I dont know what my mother used to overdose , she had been drinking and had taken what was left of her medication at the time. I wonder if the pack was full if she would still be alive.

In order to not tell the rest of my life story, I will simply state my mother was an abusive drunk and my family could never get help because i knew my mother would get punished, loose her job or get fined, all of which would have adversely affected the well being of my family whilst doing nothing but exacerbating the real issues.

My fathers name is Gregory Russell, he used cannabis after work and drank alchohol socially,

although i wasnt aware of his cannabis use until i was an adult, around the age of 20, i found his pipe one night in his bathroom, when i asked he confirmed that he had always used cannabis. Not everyone needs help, not everyones drug use is a problem and absolutely noone should be punished in any form simply for using drugs.

PREVENT YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN FROM ACCESSING AND USING CANNABIS IN VICTORIA;

Young people, children and adults should be given accurate information about potential harms of cannabis, with specific emphasis on any potential harms to youth. This can be done through advertisement through various platforms such as social media, bus stops, television, sporting events warning labels and signage on the product itself and in the place of purchase, ect.

By legalising and regulating cannabis for adults any reduction in the illicit market would ultimately make it harder for youth youth to access cannabis.

PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY IN RELATION TO THE USE OF CANNABIS IN VICTORIA;

A large percentage of Australians have or do currently use cannabis and the majority of cannabis is grown indoors, using harmful chemicals, potentially laced with other drugs, often by violent profit driven criminal organisations that use the profits for more crime creating more harm, the current product contains unknown ratios of cannabinoids and potential impurities such as mold and bacteria. By regulating cannabis it provides an opportunity to also regulate the product and reduce crime associated with the illicit market, allows for redistribution of funds from punishing users to social, family and community services, health, education, ect.

Implent education campaigns around the potential harms of cannabis use, ensuring not to create negative stigma that would act as a deterrent to seeking help.

Implent education campaigns around the use of cannabis and driving, as well as a strategy that test for impairment.

IMPLEMENT HEALTH EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS AND PROGRAMS TO ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF DEUG USE, IN PARTICULAR, CANNABIS USE;

I think when implementing the campains care should be taken to not stigmatize current users, this prevents them seeking help, negative stereotypes can also prevent any support from being as effective. People should also not feel like they are going to get into trouble when they seek help as it also acts as a deterrent to seeking help and can prevent people from being entirely open if receiving help.

PREVENT CRIMINAL ACTIVITY RELATING TO THE ILLEGAL CANNABIS TRADE IN VICTORIA;

Legalise cannabis and offer incentive for current producers in the illicit market to transition into a licit market.

Afterwards, legalisation would allow for a significant redistribution of resources from focussing on users to focus on illicit supply.

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File1:

File2:

File3: