

Inquiry into the use of Cannabis in Victoria


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:

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

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

Individual, Working in the health sector

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

life impact of non-violent crime resulting in jail and how jail affects the overall employability (and therefore socioeconomic status) which can result in further criminal activity (making a snowball effect on a non-violent crime where the only harm is a

YOUR SUBMISSION

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

Select all that apply.

Do you think there should be restrictions on the use of cannabis? :

Sale should remain illegal. 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.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: /home/parliament/public_html/tmp/5ec5d7bd97626-submission to the inquiry of cannabis use in victoria.docx

File2:

File3:

Signature:

The effects of Marijuana impose many risks, more so to people under the age of 25 when referring to medical risks. However, the largest risk of its use is simply the legal consequences. The effects on mental health vary widely on the strain, and the criminal system forces anyone who enters it to become trapped in a cycle of crime from what started off as a non-violent and relatively victimless crime can become much worse.

The problem lies under our perception of Marijuana in comparison to other drugs, we are fighting the war on drugs by looking at it entirely wrong. Marijuana has not been proven to be a gateway drug at all, the gateway drugs are alcohol and prescription medication. Alcohol lowers the inhibitions of its user making them do things they would not do sober, that is why party pills became so popular. Prescription Medication is a gateway drug as users get addicted to them easily whilst they are taking them for other reasons, to treat pain, after surgery, etc. Once their prescription runs out, or the cause has been treated, the doctor asks the patient to stop or lower their dosage, but addiction is a chemical and mental health related issue, and once someone is addicted lowering their dosage or stopping altogether may be too big of a jump for some, so they move on to something else that they can access, other drugs with similar effects but are more dangerous as they are made in uncontrolled environments and without working out an effective dosage, these drugs that they move on to, heroin and ice in particular, are life changing for the worse.

Marijuana is not a gateway drug, its users do not wish to move on to heavier drugs as when a person is high on weed they become lazy, sleepy, and are not looking for more drugs as they are usually quite content. Marijuana is an effective pain relief, is not chemically addictive like many pain relieving opioids, the effects it can have on mental health range depending on the strain, this is an important thing to factor as when a user buys Marijuana they more often than not do not know what strain it is, and that can factor into the positive and negative effects on mental health. Some strains of Marijuana is very effective for people with anxiety, PTSD, and depression. There are strains that are incredibly ineffective and harmful to those with mental health issues, but without further testing and standardisation, the common user must gamble with their mental health. As Marijuana can be more effective than common psychiatric medication (with fewer negative side effects) this risk is one that thousands are willing to make.

The effects of Marijuana on underage individuals is a concern, as it is for alcohol. Alcohol is incredibly harmful with very few positive effects, none of which are health related when ingested. Alcohol causes car accidents, it enhances violent behaviour, making domestic violence worse, and can cause lasting brain damage especially on youth and children. Yet still we sell alcohol, I am not advocating against selling it, but in comparison to marijuana is the lesser of two evils. If marijuana were legalized or decriminalized, restrictions around use for children and youths would have to be in place, but education around the effects of marijuana without bias should be delivered without exceptions to all schools regardless of religion. Young people will experiment with drugs and/or alcohol, and if they are not aware of the risks and facts they do so blindly. If we present the facts with a bias and ignore the other considerations (by only listing the negative effects) we shoot ourselves in the foot by undermining our knowledge. Any young person who knows someone who has had the positive effects of marijuana will doubt the information if we pick cherry pick facts and we can cause a lack of respect for the presenter by making the young people wonder if they are truly knowledgeable on the subject.

On the criminal system, our war on drugs is losing as we treat addiction as a criminal issue rather than a health one. Addiction is a health problem that results in a mental health issue of severe nature, addicts do not choose to be addicts, anyone can become an addict, someone can easily become addicted to narcotics and opiates after being in an accident. Whilst we treat addiction as a

criminal one, the non-violent crime will cause a person to lose job prospects (not all addicts are non-functioning members of society, in fact most hold jobs and are middle class). If a non-violent offender can't get a job after leaving jail (our unemployment rate is already high) they can and will turn to crime, to self-soothe the depressive effects of not being able to look after yourself they may turn to drugs again, they might delve into crime that causes more victims, overall their addiction is not treated and in fact worsened as addiction is much harder to battle in low socioeconomic status individuals. Those on the poverty line have much worse mental health issues, and drug addiction is much harsher on those with untreated mental health issues.

If we continue to attack the victims in the war on drugs, the addicts who are taken advantage of by dealers and their own brain chemistry, then we will continue to lose the war on drugs. As we continue to do the same thing without making changes to our methods, we are proving our insanity by refusing to face the facts that we are losing, nothing is changing and the war on drugs will continue.

If we look outside of the criminal system for answers on how to fight this battle, we can see more evidence backed research on the effects of decriminalization. It results in less use overall, and if you replace the criminal system with therapy you can actually target the problem by digging out the root cause. Drug Dealers should not be included in a gentler approach, they prey on the weak and exploit workers, they are hard to eliminate but if we were to legalise marijuana sales we would cut them out of the picture completely, so long as the cost of legal marijuana is not steeper than it is to buy off the streets, and even then, more people are willing to pay for something legally if it is accessible and affordable.

In conclusion, if we spent less money on busting users and putting them in jail costing the tax payer millions, and instead put that money into the health and mental health sector, we might treat the problem rather than scolding the individuals who need help and making the problem worse. The more we treat the war on drugs as a criminal issue and not a health related one, the faster we lose.

