

Inquiry into the use of Cannabis in Victoria

Miss Sera Jane Ghaly

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::

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

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

Individual,Academic and research,Working in the health sector

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.,There should be no restrictions.

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

I am writing this submission as a current student of Endeavour College of Natural Health, and am currently undergoing a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Naturopathy). I also have a background as a cannabis writer for multiple publications in the USA, Canada, and The Netherlands. I have chosen to specifically address educational tools for young people and children surrounding the dangers of drug use, including cannabis.

To begin, I believe education to children surrounding the danger of drug use necessarily must begin with medical professionals being educated about drug use. I cannot speak for those undergoing a medical degree, but thus far, in my Bachelor of Health Sciences (Naturopathy), cannabis was only ever discussed with respect to its pharmacology profile. The entire biological system called "the endocannabinoid system" was omitted from my education. Fortunately, my career as a cannabis writer has given me many opportunities to learn about the endocannabinoid system and familiarize myself with academic literature on the topic of cannabis.

So, I'll go on to say that I don't necessarily believe that successful health campaigns can be run without first introducing the concept of cannabis into the study of health. For example, I was exposed to the pharmacology profile of cannabis, without any education on its potential to be used as therapy. For the students interested, this is extra-curricular learning. However, as naturopaths, we are arguably going to be the first (or second) link between patients and cannabis inquiries. I am also aware that for the majority of doctors educated in the last 50 - 70 years, cannabis education never address potential therapies (also because scientific research came to a near standstill). Thus, most doctors only understand cannabis for its negative side effects, and not for its therapeutic potential. I'm not quite sure how you can successfully run an

educational campaign for children about the dangers of drug use if there is still no education on the potential for therapeutics for the professionals involved - naturopaths, nurses, and doctors.

From experience, cannabis is only delivered in the syllabus as a "drug", and is virtually never delivered in the syllabus as a potential therapeutic. This leads to inaccurate as well as sensationalized media on the topic. Cannabis is either touted as a "cure all" or a "dangerous drug", when in reality its true nature is somewhere in the middle, along with many other pharmaceuticals. Without proper education for professionals, the cohort of people with the skills and knowledge to accurately deliver educational campaigns is hugely reduced. It instead becomes a topic accessible only to a select few, rather than to all of those for whom it is pertinent: nurses, doctors, naturopaths, herbalists, pharmacists, and anybody else who delivers or dispenses drugs, natural or otherwise.

I genuinely believe that if the Australian Government wants to create a successful education program for young people and children about the dangers of cannabis use, you first have to educate the professionals who are going to be a link between the public and the medical cannabis sector. I also don't believe that the dangers can be accurately and effectively communicated without proper education about how it is used therapeutically. I understand that knowledge about how cannabis is used therapeutically is not important information for young people and children. However, in order for that opinion to be formulated (how to accurately deliver information to children about the dangers of cannabis use), there absolutely **MUST** be an entire education for health professionals. This would include cannabis' dangers as well as its potential uses as a therapeutic.

As a student of Naturopathy at Endeavour College of Natural Health, I advocate for the introduction of cannabis education into the syllabus. This is because I fundamentally understand the importance of education about a plant whose legalization is on the horizon. I also think the fact that cannabis isn't part of the syllabus as political, as we study plants such as Ephedra sinica and Papaver somniferum - which are illegal to grow and dispense. Yet we still learn about them. It is imperative for medical professionals to learn about cannabis in its entirety (what we know and what we don't know) before we can even think about delivering that kind of information to young people and children.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Sera Jane Ghaly