



Inquiry into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria - Youth Forum

Discussion questions worksheet

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Discussion 1: How can we improve education about cannabis and other drugs in Victoria?

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Discussion 1: How can we improve education about cannabis and other drugs in Victoria?

- While there were varying different examples given for different approaches given by each of the different participants, the principle of “Tell the truth” was one shared by all participants, how this could be implemented would be to tell students the information collated by medical organisations/non-profits(e.g ADF,RACGP, AMA, Headspace ect) rather than teaching internally sources government information which students know is either outdated, misleading or false (or as one student put it “We know that Cannabis isn’t going to kill us, we[Young Adults] aren’t stupid
- Government and especially the state government should collaborate with current organisations in the area rather than trying to start from scratch, it has been painfully clear from the recent federal government “Respect Matters” initiative that schemes often don’t result in positive outcomes for any key stakeholders, Usually entailing poor quality, bizarre views and high costs. While the State government does better than the federal government in this respect, there is still room for improvement and many Universities, High schools and TAFEs have quite positive relationships with organisations such as Headspace for example which can given the vast amount of expertise and experience these organisations have can provide services at lower cost or no cost and much higher quality
- Religious schools and Independent schools often do a horrible job/exclude this information with members making the following remarks
“The teacher just wrote Drugs=Bad on the board and told us not to do drugs because all drugs are bad, there wasn’t even a distinction between prescription medication, common food additives such as caffeine and illegal substances”
“They just showed me one slide and that was it, I can’t even remember it”
“They just showed me a 1960s eskue video in which I was told by a guy that sounded a bit like Richard Nixon that Drugs are bad and “marijuana was an addictive drug which produces in its users insanity criminality and death”
- While all the participants in our group were from independent or religious schools, other groups had similar experiences
- It was mentioned that similar approaches to sex education such as abstinence education resulted in worse health outcomes for stakeholders.

Discussion 2: The impacts of cannabis use and how the Government can deliver better services

Harm reduction services:

- We felt that having more of an emphasis on a harm reduction approach at a State government level may result in better health outcomes
- While prevention strategies seem like a good idea, some prevention strategies result in more harm for example, a lack of education due to the idea that educating Victorians on Cannabis use is somehow “encouraging its use” regardless of the fact that a vast majority of young people are aware of the substance and and likely are offered the opportunity to purchase these substances on a regular basis by peers
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Better education:

- Not providing education or even optional education on safe ways to use Cannabis can be quite harmful with risk factors
- Medical based approach (rather than a information that sometimes seems to be dreamt up by political ideology)
- While prevention strategies seem like a good idea, some prevention strategies result in more harm for example, a lack of education due to the idea that educating Victorians on Cannabis use is somehow “encouraging its use” regardless of the fact that a vast majority of young people are aware of the substance and and likely are offered the opportunity to purchase these substances on a regular basis by peers

Medical based approach

- University collaboration

More research should be conducted into the effects of Cannabis and the present regulatory environment can discourage/prevent that. This needs to be addressed

- GPs

General Practitioners and medical professionals should be involved in the education process, they should review any information being provided to students and be available to students and young adults for consultations regarding these topics

- Government partnering with organisations such as Headspace

As mentioned before our group felt the state government should partner with specialist organisations already in this area to ensure quality of resources for all stakeholders

Discussion 3: Cannabis and the law—how cannabis prohibition affects young people

- Current laws have led to selective enforcement of laws on minorities. These discriminatory practices have resulted in some individuals being treated as “second

class citizens” with their access to employment and education being curtailed due to a criminal record

- Quality and safety of products offered on the black market varies, some dangerous substances are added to Cannabis without the knowledge of young people leading to serious harm
- As a result of Government mandate, governments have unintentionally made Cannabis a “gateway drug” to more harmful substances such as opiates and methamphetamines that is causing large amounts of harm to youths and their communities
- Cannabis prohibition has given organised crime a monopoly on Cannabis production and artificially increased the price of Cannabis leading to greater supply due Supply Demand economics.
- Addiction services are underfunded or non-existent because Cannabis from black market isn't being taxed to account for negative externalities.
- As a result of poor education, Youths aren't given the information on how to consume the substance safely and the risk factors to consider.
- Cannabis is replacing alcohol for many young people because Alcohol is harder to obtain than Cannabis

Discussion 4 - Should cannabis be decriminalised and/or legalised in Victoria?

- Anyone of any age with a medical exemption should be allowed to access Cannabis
- Anyone who has a limited lifespan left should be able to access Cannabis
- It was the view of all involved that Cannabis should be legalised and treated similarly to Alcohol or Tobacco given it causes much less harm than these substances and many of the negative side effects caused are actually results of failed legislation based on ideology and pseudoscience rather than objective scientific based conclusions.
- We felt that it should be decriminalised at 18 and legalised at 21
- Youths younger than 21 wishing to obtain the substance for recreational use should participate in a similar scheme to the GLS system with participants being required to complete educational milestones in order for them to have informed consent when they gain access to the substance
- This should be coupled with healthcare, public health and education programs on the effects, side effects, risks and safe practice for consumption of Cannabis
- Cannabis should be taxed similar to Alcohol or Tobacco in order to fund Cannabis services related education, healthcare and treatment
- Legalisation of Cannabis would prevent Youths from potentially being offered opiates and methamphetamines reducing overall harm to Youths and their communities
- Laws should be set out to ensure that most Cannabis producers remain small, independent and ethical in order for economic opportunities relating to Cannabis legalisation be fairly distributed