

I, like many of my peers, have been waiting for this inquiry. For too long has my government disappointed and shunned me with their refusal to represent and protect all members of our community. For too long it has clung to counterintuitive measures for the prevention of drug related harm. For too long life changing, lifesaving policies have been prevented from being implemented.

And why? Because my government, in a supposedly fair and free country, demonises all drug users as addicts and dehumanises all drug addicts. The message is loud and clear: If you use drugs, we don't care about your life. That is the only conclusion I can possibly draw from actions such as a refusal to introduce pill testing to festivals despite the success of similar policies in the Netherlands (1). Or a reluctance to introduce safe injecting rooms to North Richmond despite the pleas of both experts and the public (2).

Instead we have a failing war on drugs that is costing people their lives. People like my cousin who overdosed in a KFC bathroom back in the nineties. Or the 172 Victorians who died under similar circumstances in 2015. Many of these were preventable deaths. Who is anyone to decide that these lives didn't matter? Are we really so high and mighty that we are playing judge, jury and executioner with the indifference of the public? Those are not the values I was raised to believe are befitting of an Australian citizen.

And as for the rights of our citizens, what about our right to access treatment for our illnesses? How ludicrously long it took for medicinal marijuana to come to our state. It is a great step in the right direction, but other permissions must follow. MAPS (3) is an incredible organisation that is leading the way for research into the treatment of a host of psychiatric dysfunctions using psychedelic substances. The early indications are promising and deserve to be explored more fully. How can we logically allow drugs such as anti-depressants, with all of their side effects, and not allow medical studies into LSD? And I say this with an awareness of sounding caught up in 'conspiracy culture'. But I must. Anecdotally speaking, anti-depressants saved my life once but they were not without side effects. But LSD has also changed my life, and the lives of many around me, for the better. In my circles, I would have to say that I have seen both substances pull people back from the brink of depression and suicidal ideation quite equally.

But we shouldn't have to be relying on anecdotes. These are things that we should know all there is to know about. We should not be letting misplaced anxiety prevent us from the pursuit of knowledge. We need policy changes to reflect the understanding that we have been missing the whole picture for a very long time. We have been fearful and emotive and not rational. I believe that we can be better than that. Our society deserves better: all members of our society.

Please review the following articles and webpages if you require more information about the specific policies or programs I have mentioned in this letter. There is a wealth of information out there, written by people with far more expertise than myself. I am just one person, but I am one of many.

1. <https://spectator.com.au/2017/02/pill-testing/>
2. <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/coroner-recommends-trial-of-safe-injecting-room-in-north-richmond-amid-heroin-deaths-20170220-gugy0u.html>
3. <http://www.maps.org/>

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