



IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:

**Portfolio committee No 1.**

**Inquiry into the regulation of cannabis**

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Thank you for the opportunity for NSWNMA to appear at the recent hearings on cannabis regulation.

We find the transcript to be an accurate record of the hearing.

We were asked to comment on a number of Questions on Notice following on from that appearance by Michael Whaites, Assistant General Secretary NSWNMA.

We would refer to our submission and note that some of the questions are better answered by others with more expertise. The NSWNMA continues to advocate for a harm minimization approach to issues of addiction and that issues of drug addiction should be treated as a health issue and not a criminal issue.

We have reviewed the Questions on notice from the transcript and feel that there is little we can add.

**Question from The Hon John Ruddick: The Association supports decriminalization - do you see decriminalisation as a step towards legalization?**

As to the issue of legalization, we have not surveyed our members on this issue, so the NSWNMA does not have a position. We support decriminalization and for issues of drug dependency to be treated as a health issue with a harm minimization approach. Mr Whaites addressed this in his evidence.

**Also from The Hon John Ruddick: There are a lot of jurisdictions where cannabis is either decriminalised or legalised. What jurisdictions do you think are doing that well in terms of having an impairment test, not a detection test?**

We are not aware of any jurisdiction which has developed a reliable test for THC intoxication. Many jurisdictions have various sobriety tests – but we are unaware of any evidence that recommends any particular approach. Noting that THC may be detected in the saliva of patients who are prescribed medicinal cannabis by a doctor, without their being impairment, our view is that it should be treated as any other legally prescribed medication, and patients warned not to drive or operate machinery if affected.

**Question from The Chair: Do you think that we should be testing for opiates in roadside drug tests, or should we take away the medical defence for opiates?**

The Association does not have a policy position on this question. Again, our principal approach to alcohol and other drugs is to take a harm minimisation approach, that addiction in any form is a health issue and needs to be treated as such.

**Question from The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Mr Whaites, can you talk to the adverse health impacts of incarceration?

We are not aware of any evidenced based research that details the impact of interaction with the criminal justice system, apart from the comments we have already alluded to in our evidence. There are other organisations who may be better placed to comment on this question.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute towards the debate in this emerging therapeutic field.

Yours sincerely

**MICHAEL WHAITES**

Assistant General Secretary