

**Submission
No 65**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL
PURPOSES**

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Date received: 15/02/2013

I have served my country in war, and served my state as a Police Officer. I now use cannabis regularly to treat pain, instead of opiates, which have a debilitating effect on my body.

Use of Medical Cannabis Inquiry

NSW Legislative Council

Damon Adams, February 2013.

My name is Damon Adams. I am 35 years old, and happily married with two young sons. I served in the Royal Australian Navy for 11 years on active duty, and was also a Police Officer in the South Australia Police.

Whilst employed with the South Australia Police, I suffered an injury to my right knee, resulting in the removal of a large part of my medial meniscus. I was placed on work cover, and referred to a pain management specialist, and was eventually prescribed a combination of Oxycontin and Tramadol for the pain.

The side effects I experienced from the opiates to deal with the pain, was sometimes worse than the original pain itself. Such side effects I experienced were severe insomnia, sweating, irrepressible itching, and constipation. I could no longer put up with the side effects of the prescription drugs, and the pain wasn't getting any better.

It was about this time that I was speaking to a friend with Multiple Sclerosis, who mentioned that she used cannabis for her condition, and recommend I try it. As someone with a police and military background, and raised by a conservative religious family, using cannabis was something I'd never considered. Even at the

Police Academy, all cadets are indoctrinated to believe that ‘all drugs are bad’, and those that use them are most likely criminals.

The priority of my pain management finally overcame my moral judgement, and I sourced some cannabis to try. I used the cannabis (dried flowers – ‘bud’) in a vaporiser, and within minutes my pain, which was always present and noticeable, was no longer noticeable. The pain was still there, but the cannabis had lowered it to a point where it no longer became an issue, and I could achieve ordinary everyday tasks with little effect from the pain, or the cannabis itself. The only side effect I have experienced from cannabis is a dry mouth, and of course the euphoria. Hardly a comparison to the debilitating side effects I suffered using prescription opiates.

I have been using cannabis for about two years now, on a semi-regular basis, when required for pain management. I am forced to purchase it through the black market, which involves a substantial amount of risk to myself. Being able to have access to cannabis legally, and medically, will mean I can not also have peace of mind and a wholesome life, but I can also feel safe knowing that my health is a priority, and that I’m not breaking any laws.

Since using cannabis, I have thoroughly researched the Cannabis plant, and using the extensive information available through the internet, re-educated myself using evidence based, peer reviewed research, using modern scientific methods. Almost every fact about cannabis I knew, or was taught by SAPOL, was either a blatant lie, or misinformation and propaganda produced almost a century ago from a racist politician. The stigma and taboo surrounding cannabis is rife, and the 'gateway theories' that prohibitionists exclaim hold very little to none, scientific regard.

Cannabis can be smoked, vaporised (which is a far healthier option than smoking), ingested, or used as a tincture. It is more natural than any pill I can be prescribed for pain, and has evolved along side humans as can be proven with the endocannabinoid system, which all mammals have. It interacts with my body far better than any other opiate I've tried, and the side effects of cannabis are easily managed without detriment.

I firmly believe that Australian's should be given the opportunity to have access to cannabis for medical purposes. The amount of suffering, across a range of disorders, will be dramatically and spectacularly reduced. My wife and family Doctor fully support me, and I will continue to use cannabis to treat my pain effectively,

because nothing else I have tried legally, comes close to the relief that cannabis provides me.

I have found that Indica strains of cannabis, or Indica dominant hybrids are best for my pain, but due to prohibition, it's sometimes very difficult to source the right type of cannabis. Being such a hardy plant, it will grow in many conditions, and is easily grown in any backyard. Once the plant has flowered, it's as simple as hanging it up to dry, and then into a jar for 'curing'. That's as simple as this medicine gets.

How can such a simple medicine, that has zero recorded deaths in the history of literature, be banned by a government, that has overwhelming evidence it is a miracle drug, is beyond me.

Cannabis needs to be made available to the Australian public as a medical resource immediately. It numbs pain, helps someone with Multiple Sclerosis walk, and stops the spread of cancer in a child with an inoperable brain tumour. These are all instances widely known, but never discussed by media, government, or prohibitionists.

I will continue to use cannabis to treat my pain, whether it remains illegal or not. I will not allow a government to have control over my body, or what I put into my body. I will also not allow a government

to make decisions concerning my body on my behalf, which includes what medicine I use to manage my pain. I recommend cannabis to friends and colleagues that may be suffering from a condition where prescription medications either aren't as effective, or the side effects aren't worth it. It may not be the solution for everyone, but it works for so many.

Since trying cannabis, and realising that it has such potential, I have since become an international member of NORML, and have been appointed as the Vice President of LEAP Australia. I am also an outspoken medical cannabis advocate, something which four years ago, I would have never seen myself doing.

I sincerely hope the committee open their mind to new research, and the spectacular way that cannabis interacts with the human body. Our CB1 and CB2 receptors can do amazing things with cannabis, it's natural, we've evolved to use it, and it's a lot easier to produce than any prescription pharmaceutical medicine.

I am willing to present my submission in person should the committee see fit, where I could answer further questions if needed.