

**Submission
No 30**

INQUIRY INTO USE OF CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

Organisation: National Drug Research Institute

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

To the Committee

Re: Use of cannabis for medical purposes (Inquiry)

We are currently conducting an online survey of Australian cannabis growers, as part of an international study being conducted in 10 countries. The survey aims to better understand who grows cannabis, reasons for growing, methods of growing, and experience with the criminal justice system. To date, 442 Australian growers have responded, including 113 from NSW.

There are a number of findings of relevance to the Inquiry from our survey of cannabis growers. We summarise some of them here but would welcome the opportunity to provide a more fulsome summary to the Inquiry in person. Please note that these preliminary findings are based on the sample to date and are subject to change once we have completed data collection.

Over half (54%) of our current sample of Australian growers reported that they grew cannabis for their own medical use. The most commonly treated conditions were reported as: depression and other mood disorders (49%), anxiety or panic disorders (47%), inflammation of the joints (arthritis) (36%), chronic pain (35%), migraines and headaches (27%), bowel problems (18%), post-traumatic stress disorder (18%), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (12%). Almost all medical users (93%) reported that at least one of their diagnoses (that they were treating with cannabis) was diagnosed by a doctor or medical professional.

Of those who reported using cannabis to treat a condition diagnosed by a doctor or medical professional, we asked whether the doctor had suggested or recommended the use of cannabis. The most common response was that the doctor did not suggest or recommend cannabis and was not aware of the respondent using it for this purpose (52%). Interestingly, 19% reported that the doctor suggested or recommended use of cannabis as a medicine, while 6% said the doctor advised against its use and another 6% said the doctor refused to recommend it upon request.

We are currently preparing summaries of results with the preliminary sample and will be making a final push for recruiting some more growers over February. Once we have closed the survey, we will prepare academic papers and summaries of the results as soon as possible. The survey is part of an international collaboration where we will be able to compare growing patterns in different countries.

As background, the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) conducts and disseminates high quality research that contributes to the primary prevention of harmful drug use and the reduction of drug related harm in Australia. It does this by undertaking research designed to establish the preventive potential of a number of interventions: legislative, fiscal, regulatory and educational.

Established in 1986, the Institute is funded by the Australian Government under the Substance Misuse Prevention and Service Improvement Grants Fund. A designated WHO Collaborating Centre, the Institute's research is conducted in eight priority research areas: Alcohol policy; Indigenous Australians; Primary prevention and early intervention; Social contexts of drug use; People who continue to use alcohol and drugs; New technologies; Justice health; and Tobacco.

We would welcome the opportunity to make a more complete presentation of our findings to assist with the Inquiry's deliberations next month.

Yours sincerely

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