

**Submission
No 55**

INQUIRY INTO USE OF CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

Organisation: The Drug Advisory Council of Australia Inc
Date received: 14/02/2013

The Drug Advisory Council of Australia strongly opposes the use of cannabis as medicine.

There is worldwide debate on this issue and we recommend you take the lead from leading authorities that recommend against medical cannabis.

As this issue is prevalent in the USA we endorse the US President's Drug Policy Agency that is opposed to medical cannabis.

The health harms and driving hazards of medical cannabis are clear.

New South Wales is obliged by the UN conventions to reduce cannabis use.

Drug Advisory Council of Australia Inc.

35 Whitehorse Road
Balwyn, Vic, 3103
drugadvice@hotmail.com
Tel 03 9816 0800
14 February 2013

The Secretary,
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au

CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES INQUIRY

We wish to make a submission to your enquiry.

This issue of cannabis as a medicine is being looked at worldwide.

Our Council believes that cannabis should NOT be used as a medicine as the evidence against its use is overwhelming.

We recommend the recent American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry policy statement which opposes the use of cannabis for adolescents which is available at www.aacap.org

We recommend the article *Cannabinoids in the Treatment of Chemotherapy Induced Nausea and Vomiting* which recommends against the use of cannabis. This was published in the Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network volume 10 Number 4 April 2012.

We recommend the policy of the Office of National Drug Control Policy of the USA government that recommends against medical cannabis. Various articles are available from www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

We support the policies of the American Cancer Society, The National Cancer Institute of the USA and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society of the USA that do not support the smoked form of cannabis as medicine.

To support our opposition to the use of cannabis as a medicine we state as follows-

- Medicine is never smoked and no authority recommends the smoking of any substance.

- All prescription medicines are thoroughly tested in Australia before prescribed for medical purposes and cannabis has never been so tested.
- There are many prescribed medicines that are effective in treating symptoms rather than use highly toxic chemicals in the THC of cannabis.
- The medical evidence against cannabis shows that it is unfit for use as medicine.
- Cannabis use is clearly linked to psychosis, mental health problems, schizophrenia and brain damage that it is not medicine.
- Cannabis has been shown to suppress the human immune system so why would you use it against the human bodies fight against illnesses.
- Cannabis is carcinogenic so why would you use it for a person fighting against cancer. The THC in cannabis is more toxic than the smoke of tobacco.
- Cannabis use impairs driver's abilities so why would you increase the potential for more road and industrial trauma.
- The use of cannabis as medicine undermines the message of the scientific harms of the use of cannabis.
- The proposal for the use of cannabis as a medicine is the campaign for the legitimacy of cannabis in order for it to become more widely available in the community.
- Given the enormous funds now spent on stopping the smoking of tobacco due to its known health harms it is unwise to allow the smoking of another product where the health harms are worse.
- We believe the New South Wales government is bound by the United Nations Conventions on Drugs which mandates drug policies that reduce the demand for illicit drugs.

Accordingly, we strongly recommend that your Committee recommends AGAINST the use of cannabis as a medicine.

Having said this, there is a possibility of some small number of chemical substances in the THC of cannabis that may be useful in medicine after extensive research and testing and approval by the National Health and Medical Research Council. There are products on the market that so use some of these chemicals.

We would be happy to provide you with any further information.

David Perrin.
Executive Officer