

**Submission
No 47**

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

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The criminalisation and prohibition of cannabis cultivation and consumption for medicinal, cultural, religious, spiritual, social, recreational or personal use is well past it's used by date.

To imprison and punish people for exercising a relationship with a plant that people have had a relationship with since the dawn of the deliberate and considered cultivation and utilisation of plants for food, medicine, ritual and pleasure, is a madness that has resulted in the oppression and persecution of a significant section of society...cannabis consumers, medicinal or otherwise.

Today's politicians and police and the judicial system in regards to today's drug-laws, in this case cannabis, are on par with those politicians and police and courts of the day that would deny and actively work against women having the right to vote, that would lock up an aboriginal for being an aboriginal or punish and persecute a person because they were same-sex attracted and in a practicing same-sex relationship. Today, women vote and great advances in gender equality have been made. Aboriginals, in theory, are equals with all Australians, despite the work to be done, including drug-law reform. No longer do people of the GLBT community need to live in fear the law. However, today cannabis consumers live in fear of the law for doing something that for them, is as natural as eating or breathing or making love, and this fear is doing far more harm to the cannabis consumer than the herbal inebriant can do.

Much attention in the public discourse around cannabis has been given to the supposed correlation between cannabis use, cannabis-related-psychosis and the psychoactive property that is THC. THC is often blamed for being the cause of psychosis in a minority of regular users. A far greater contribution to cannabis-related-psychosis than THC is the law in relation to THC. Prolonged fear and guilt can lead to paranoia anxiety and psychosis. Fear of the law and the possibility of losing one's liberty, dignity or of being financially crippled, has a serious negative effect on the psyche of cannabis consumers, not to mention the unwarranted guilt and shame some people experience when breaking a law, however unjustifiable or immoral the law. Given time, this fear, anxiety, guilt and shame can lead to serious psychological problems...problems that are not likely to have arisen if the consumption of cannabis were not considered or treated as a crime

The law is further adding towards any harms related to the consumption of cannabis in that it also means that sincere harm reduction education is not able to be explored and exploited in schools or publicly. Also, the law means that many in society that have never used cannabis or know much about cannabis know only of the half-truths and misinformation that has been much of the discourse to date and this does nothing to help reduce the harms associated with the use and mis-use of cannabis. Because of the law there is often an ill-informed or misguided social perception of cannabis consumers as being dole bludgers or lazy and unmotivated or criminals when the truth is that the vast majority of regular and occasional cannabis consumers are otherwise law-abiding citizens, male and female of various ages, colours, classes and creeds.

The incidents of cannabis-related-psychosis can be greatly reduced, even with an increase in use, by legalising cannabis. Legalisation will mean cannabis consumers no longer need to live in constant fear and anxiety or with the unwarranted yet equally destructive experiences of guilt and shame that can go along with breaking a law. Legalisation, in time, will lead to normalisation and this will reduce the ostracisation and negative social stigma that some cannabis consumers are sensitive to. Normalisation shouldn't be confused with promotion or celebration. Legalisation and normalisation will greatly reduce harms associated with cannabis use.

The many medicinal and therapeutic uses of cannabis are known and have been known and used for thousands of years. It is absurd that we have wasted so much time, money and quality of life by keeping the cultivation and utilisation of this most eclectic of herbs a crime...that in itself is the real crime.

To think that the law in relation to cannabis use is doing far more harm to the individual and to society also needs to be addressed because the health and well being of the recreational, religious, cultural, spiritual and social cannabis consumer is of equal importance to the medicinal consumer of cannabis who is undergoing chemotherapy or is epileptic or has AIDS, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis or is experiencing clinical-depression or alcohol withdrawal. We are way behind on the research of cannabis despite what we already know to be true. Legalising the medicinal use of cannabis, from it's

raw, smokeable form to edibles and tinctures is the first step towards a happier, healthier community that experiences less crime and has more money directed towards schools, transport and health.

Thanks for taking the time to read this submission.

Andrew Ongley.