

**Submission
No 61**

**INQUIRY INTO ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT
(MEDICINAL CANNABIS-EXEMPTIONS FROM
OFFENCES) BILL 2021**

Organisation: Nimbin HEMP Embassy

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After the saliva testing rules on driving started being enforced in our area the court cases started piling up and often in Lismore court there were up to fifty cases each Monday morning. Magistrates soon realised drivers were not impaired and in fact had consumed cannabis the previous night or even days before, and increasingly drivers did not lose their licence. One magistrate actually resigned over the laws saying he couldn't stomach taking away licences from people for no good reason.

Many people lost their jobs because public transport is so light on in country areas. Others I know of personally have had far reaching consequences from losing their licence. Once you lose your job and cannot pay rent or mortgage payments, family lives can disintegrate to the point of family breakups and homelessness. Believe me this has happened and I also believe there have been suicides as a result of the cascading affects of people losing their licence and work and families.

It is my understanding that to free up the courts the rules were changed to automatic cancellation of ones licence for 3 months if THC is found in a drivers saliva now in NSW. It may have also changed because Magistrates were not cancelling licences if they believed drivers were unimpaired.

This was my experience 2 years ago. I wrote a letter to the magistrate explaining I had been using cannabis for decades as my choice of medicine to prevent migraines and cope with childhood ptsd. The police agreed i showed no signs of impairment. If this was today I would automatically lose my licence unless I challenged the charge in court.

It is my understanding that Australia stands alone on the planet with this law. No other country is so harsh. There is absolutely no evidence that the mere presence of miniscule amounts of THC has any affect at all and 10 nanograms, or ten parts per billion, is truly miniscule. Why is the bar set so low?

It is perhaps not well enough known that cannabis is uniquely fat soluble and stays in your system for months while other illegal drugs disappear in a day or two. Our bodies store cannabinoids in our fat while they expel toxic drugs. This has caused multiple health misunderstandings about cannabis. Blood tests after an accident for example may show the presence of cannabis one month or even more after smoking a joint! Perhaps this is where confusion has arisen?

Thousands of people enquire through the HEMP Embassy every year about using cannabis as a medicine and many of them find relief from pain using the herb where other drugs have failed, or cause upsetting side effects. I estimate fifty percent of these people do not even try using cannabis because of the fear of losing their licence. The pharmaceutical companies must be happy about that and I hear from Canberra they lobby hard to maintain these laws.

I also know many people who have stopped using cannabis because of the fear of losing their licence. Instead of having a puff at night to relax they drink alcohol usually. Many others use pharmaceuticals and put up with the side effects. No doubt both these vested interests are keen to keep cannabis out of the pain relief market, the biggest business on earth. Big Pharma is well aware of how much their profits fall when cannabis is legalised as they have seen it clearly in recent years in America.

Why don't we study what is happening overseas where cannabis use has been legal for over twenty years in Canada and many American States? There is no increase in car accidents, in fact the opposite. I have read Colorado claims that suicides, domestic violence and deaths from car accidents are down by up to thirty percent since cannabis became legal! There is also a marked downturn in alcohol use which I suspect is part of the change. Every state in America that has legalised cannabis notices a drop in car accidents.

In virtually every trial of cannabis affected drivers I have ever read, and there have been many, drivers using cannabis are extremely focussed and if anything come across as better drivers than those unaffected!

Perhaps people don't realise regular cannabis users do it for good reason. Nimbin has a lot of alcoholics who dont drink anymore for example.

Cannabis is much loved by many epileptics as it stops them having seizures like no pharmaceuticals can enabling some to drive safely. I can tell you from my own experience driving with a migraine or even a bad headache is dangerous.

I have watched heroin addicts for years nod off as we call it, yet opiate users driving are not tested at all. Think endone, methadone, oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl, codeine in panadol and nurofen. They are not subject to tests because they are Big Pharma products I am sure. Millions of Aussies are using these drugs every day and in fact the driving laws have made many many people just change the drugs they use so they will not get busted by the RDT. Nothing about being impaired or not while driving. Bad laws create disrespect!

Also there are many illegal drugs that are not detected by the current saliva testing, or pass through the body quickly, like ice. The current cannabis testing actually encourages the use of far more dangerous illegal chemical drugs and there is no doubt the increase in ice use in Australia coincides with heavy policing of cannabis.

It has been extremely hard to get anyone to listen to reason on this issue as the two words "drug driving" are emotive to say the least, and cannabis has been maligned for decades now as a dangerous drug, so I understand the fear people have about cannabis users driving. Impairment is the real issue and already NSW Police as I understand it have a sobriety test they can do instead of the saliva test.

The saliva testing is supposed to be random but we all know once you have tested positive, or have a cannabis related police record, or an address in Nimbin, you are likely to be "randomly" pulled up and tested.

I appreciate you are looking at legal medical cannabis patients being allowed to drive but why not any cannabis user? What is the difference re their driving ability? Or is this more control from the Big Pharma lobbyists who insist we can only drive if we use their products? Seems completely unfair to me and nothing to do with road safety.

In summary the RDT is nothing to do with driver impairment which is what it is meant to be about. It looks in fact like corruption with vested interests trying to keep control of the pain relief market.

Below is a mainstream news story from this week on the subject which is worth reading. Many thanks for your time, and for holding the inquiry.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/motoring/on-the-road/big-problem-with-australian-road-rule-around-medical-cannabis/news-story/5cb3094993099067f52b9c4904e1d160>

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hempembassy.net & nimbinmardigrass.com

legalise.org.au - please join...the law is the real crime!

"Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth," Albert Einstein.