

**Submission  
No 77**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK FOR CANNABIS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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# **Submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of the Regulatory Framework for Cannabis in New South Wales.**

## **Introduction**

I am writing this submission in response to the “Impact of the Regulatory Framework for Cannabis in New South Wales” Inquiry, and express my strong support for cannabis reform and legalisation in New South Wales (NSW).

## **Historical Development and Implementation**

The historical approach to cannabis in NSW has largely been a prohibitionist one, mirroring global trends throughout the years. This has resulted in significant financial costs to the Government in terms of law enforcement, legal proceedings, and other departments, without effectively reducing cannabis use or availability. The current regulatory framework has not only failed to curb cannabis use but has also contributed to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of users, while fuelling an unregulated black market.

## **Socioeconomic Impact**

The prohibition of cannabis has profound socioeconomic impacts. It disproportionately affects lower socioeconomic communities, exacerbating existing inequalities. Legalisation offers an opportunity to redirect resources from enforcement to education, health, and community support, potentially reducing these disparities.

## **Financial Cost**

The financial cost of cannabis prohibition is substantial. Resources allocated to enforcement could be better utilised if cannabis were legalised. Legalisation would also generate revenue through taxation, similar to the models adopted in Canada and several US states, which have seen significant economic benefits without the anticipated negative societal impacts.

## **Impact on Young People and Public Health**

Current regulations have limited effectiveness in protecting young people and public health as a whole. Evidence from jurisdictions that have legalised cannabis shows that with proper regulation, including age restrictions and public education campaigns, it is possible to mitigate risks to young people and the broader community. Legalisation could lead to better health outcomes by ensuring safer, regulated access to cannabis, reducing the incidence of contaminated products on the black market.

## **Alternative Approaches**

Examining alternative regulatory frameworks in jurisdictions such as Canada, Uruguay, and several US states reveals that legalisation, coupled with robust regulation and education, can mitigate many of the concerns associated with cannabis use. These include addressing issues related to road safety, employment, and crime, by establishing clear guidelines and support systems.

## **Provisions of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023**

The provisions outlined in the “Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023” represent a progressive step towards addressing the shortcomings of the current framework. By regulating personal adult use, the bill aims to reduce the burden on the criminal justice system, improve public health outcomes, and protect young people and vulnerable communities.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence strongly supports the legalisation of cannabis in NSW as a means to improve public health, reduce socioeconomic disparities, and alleviate the financial burden on the Government. By adopting a regulated approach, NSW has the opportunity to lead in establishing a model that prioritises health, safety, and social justice, while also benefiting economically.

It is imperative that the members of the Inquiry consider the global shift towards legalisation and regulation, learning from the successes and challenges faced by other jurisdictions, to implement a framework that reflects the needs and values of NSW residents.

This submission advocates for a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to cannabis legalisation, with a focus on social justice, public health, and economic benefits. It is time for NSW to move forward with a progressive, compassionate, and pragmatic policy on cannabis.

Sincerely,  
Mark Howells