

Submission
No 80

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I strongly endorse any proposals to legalise or de-criminalise the use of cannabis. Having used cannabis regularly for more than 50 years I can attest to its many beneficial qualities, and hope to dispel some of the myths about its so-called harms.

Regarding the oft-repeated falsehood that cannabis users are lazy, indolent, detached, directionless etc, I am living proof of the opposite. I started a business from home in the mid-1970's - a business that required many skills I did not have in design, manufacturing, engineering, sales, marketing, intellectual property protection and business management.

Despite being a heavy cannabis smoker before, during and after this period, I nonetheless learnt all of these skills and built the business into a multiple award-winning enterprise, which sold almost half a billion dollars worth of woodworking products in the 25 years I owned the company.

I employed 120 people directly and several hundred others indirectly, created sixteen Australian and foreign export markets for the products that I largely invented. One of those products was judged by the Powerhouse Museum to be in the 100 Top Australian Inventions of the 20th. Century.

I found that marijuana significantly improved my lateral thinking skills, enhanced my practical skills, and opened my mind to possibilities that would probably not have emerged if I'd been "straight" and if my mind had been constrained by the tram tracks of conventional wisdom. I also found that it enabled me to see more sides of any issues that I faced, and more ways of overcoming obstacles.

Some of my best design and marketing ideas emerged while under the influence of marijuana. While my activity and output were perhaps slightly slowed down by the consumption of cannabis, my focus was actually intensified and my patience enhanced. All in all, it was a great benefit to me and to hundreds of thousands of domestic and international woodworkers.

In recent years, I have been prescribed medical marijuana because stress and my over-active brain prevented me from sleeping soundly at night. It has a soothing and relaxing effect, enabling much better sleep.

I am extremely disappointed at the current road laws which make ingestion of this substance a license-cancelling event...even up to 14 days after ingestion when any effects have clearly worn off. The testing regime is clearly wrong. If the same parameters were used to detect and punish excessive alcohol consumption from two weeks prior, there would be a national outrage. The mere presence of tiny amounts of the substance detected in a tongue swab do not in any way suggest the driver is impaired.

In fact, I maintain that marijuana use makes me a far better driver. Even if only slightly affected, I drive much more carefully, rigorously observing the speed limits - something I do not strictly do

when unaffected. I focus intently on my driving and on the road ahead - looking further ahead than I normally do. I am a much more patient driver, and more courteous.

Research I have seen indicates that road trauma decreases in states or countries which have decriminalised or legalised cannabis use, rather than increased.

The punishment for detection of tiny amounts in drivers is also disproportionately harsh in rural and regional areas, where there is little or no public transport. Loss of license often has devastating 'knock-on' consequences - loss of job, marriage, home etc. and a huge impact on the mental health of those impacted.

If the authorities were so concerned about cannabis causing driver impairment, it would be simple enough to equip police cars with a simple simulator in the back seat, where drivers suspected of being impaired could actually be tested as to their reaction speeds, observation skills, responses to threats appearing on the screen. The simulator could comprise a small computing device, a screen, steering wheel, brake and accelerator pedals. Any manner of driving situation could be created on screen and the awareness and avoidance responses objectively tested.

It is absurd to me that consumption of this natural product - which was used by many civilisations for millennia and which has wonderful medicinal properties - was made illegal world-wide by Harry Anslinger, for career enhancement, and by Richard Nixon and his cronies who supercharged the War on Drugs for shabby political reasons.

How many people have suffered unnecessarily, and how many state resources have been wasted, in criminalising this harmless substance for the last 90 years? It must stop now!