

**Submission
No 95**

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

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

It saddens and discourages me living in a modern progressive country that we are so slow in adjusting outdated unscientific and currently damaging laws and regulations for both THC and low THC cannabis.

With over 15 years of international data and real life experience to draw upon, we are behaving like NSW and Australia are the first western constituencies to be considering the legalisation and regulation of cannabis for adult recreation and self care.

We sit back, happy to provide billions of untaxed revenue for organised crime; while equally happy to spend 100s of millions of taxpayer money on pointless and harmful law enforcement.

Decades of expenditure in the criminal justice system has yielded no reduction in cannabis use or the quantity of cannabis seized.

With no science or anecdotal evidence supporting the stigma driven dogma of the 1930s about the harms to society cannabis represents; we continue to criminalise a consistent 10% of our citizens, introducing young people into the criminal justice system, exposing people of all ages to organised crime influence and making harmful substances an alternative choice to avoid RDT drama for sober drivers and workers. The current situation is absurd at best and damaging to the health and safety of a large portion of our community.

These laws adversely impacting First Nations people in a higher proportion than the majority of Australians.

In NSW close to 50,000 people are hospitalised with alcohol related issues each year. The number for hospitalisations for cannabis are so small that Health don't report them separately, including cannabis in a mixed category with only 1200 hospitalisations per year.

Yet, as a society we celebrate the consumption of the most harmful substance available in the marketplace, recreational ethanol. Our media, our culture and westernised society in general promoting the regular consumption for relaxation, stress relief and celebration.

Again, absurd that this goes unchecked while we prohibit the choice to seek the same outcomes from a health giving herb.

One can only assume that governments, state and federal are simply addicted to funding from the alcohol, pharmaceutical, cotton and paper industries; afraid to upset donors by making the only sensible decision; to legalise and regulate the cannabis market place.

Statistics show a support for this change, numbers that grow every year. Opposition is dwindling and support is growing; government is thumb twiddling on an opportunity to create revenue, new industry opportunities and sustainable well paid jobs; while at the same time ignoring the cost of ineffective law enforcement, the damage caused to youth via the criminalised use and possession of recreational substances and the cost to society incurred as people choose harmful substances over cannabis.

I ask that the NSW government stop procrastinating on this issue, start the process of cannabis legalisation as soon as possible and proactively taking steps to deregulate and expand the non THC / hemp industry; unleashing a massive regional opportunity in cannabis production and value adding business.

Bring the proposed Drug Summit forward as a matter of urgency to plan how to use the additional funding available via cannabis legalisation and regulation to remove the meth scourge from our society, create strategies to decriminalise illicit drug possession and use; while creating education and health support for people with drug dependence issues.

It is time to step up NSW. The first Australian state government to take action wins. Industry investment, jobs growth, tourism and 100s of millions in additional revenue. To not act now is just the absurd continuation of 1930s thinking. If we proposed to continue that approach to any other issue impacting society our capacity to lead would be deeply questioned.

Andrew Fenwick