

Submission
No 121

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Submission for inquiry into “Impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales”

I am writing this to support the inquiry as this is an issue that I feel there are some issues that need to be addressed.

I am a 54-year-old male, professionally employed full time and was previously a serving member of the Australian Regular Army.

As a now medical cannabis user, I can see the benefits first hand of being able to access cannabis to treat my ongoing medical conditions.

As a little bit of background, I have been using cannabis products to manage my ongoing symptoms of neuropathic nerve pain after intense chemotherapy and chronic anxiety which was a result of a long history of childhood abuse and trauma.

These cannabis products have been a blessing as I can now live a somewhat normal life but the current laws mean that I also have to be wary of using my medications, this also has an impact on my mobility on being able to drive, career aspirations and whenever I leave my home with any legally prescribed medical cannabis products.

I actually support the legalisation and regulation of cannabis products. This would do a lot weed out criminal elements in the supply chain. A much healthier alternative would be to be able access products that have been tested for quality and impurities unlike those that exist in the black market, this could also create a moderate revenue base that could be reinvested back into health services and harm prevention. Like with any drug there needs to be safeguards in place such as those for alcohol or any other prescription medication.

With regards to my current circumstances, I see some areas that should be addressed as I am confident that I am only the tip of the iceberg, and that many other people suffer the same cause of anxiety under the current regulatory framework. Whilst I understand that safe regulatory change takes time, I would like to comment on a couple of items.

Carrying cannabis medications legally requires this to be in its original container with prescription label attached. Can there not be some common-sense changes made, maybe some form of medical ID card or proof of being prescribed that can be presented in lieu of my current situation which as it stands is carrying 1 or 2, 15-gram medical jars (think 2 small to medium jars of vegemite as far size) with the label, if you feel you could need to take some with you for the day out, this can potentially total 30g of cannabis on one has to carry! To put this in context, I personally use less than 0.5-1 gram a day. This is a major drawback and as a result I often avoid taking my prescribed medication with me due to the hassle involved.

Driving is unfortunately no longer an option for me due to the longevity of these oil soluble THC products in your system for over seven days and the current testing regime only on testing

on the presence of THC in your system versus impairment. Having driven heavy vehicles for a number of years and being still being the current holder of a HR class licence, I am acutely aware of the results of road trauma and I do not condone anyone driving if a level of a chemical substance affects one's ability to react to a situation.

From the research that I have done on the topic, the science of roadside testing for THC is still in its infancy. Until the science catches up, the current testing regime needs some safeguards put in place so as not to penalise those who have a legally prescribed detectable drug in their system but are in no way impaired in a way that would affect their ability to drive.

From my perspective this has stalled my career progression as I consider myself effectively having no having a driver's licence because of the fear of falling foul of the current regulatory framework. This has prevented me applying for positions that I am actually overqualified for due to the possible requirement of having to drive occasionally.

Whilst I realise the introduction of a medical defence for medical cannabis users who are the subject of a roadside drug test for THC as is being looked at in other states and a step in the right direction, I could foresee this still would be an extremely traumatic and expensive experience to contest this through the current framework. As mentioned earlier until the testing science catches up there should be some safeguards in place.

A suggestion that may possibly work would be that medical cannabis users could undergo some form of sobriety test such as those used before the .05 tests for alcohol using breath analysis were introduced. In addition to this, if a driver tested positive for traces of THC but were showing no signs of impairment, they could possibly produce some medical use ID card that would confirm that they were a medically prescribed cannabis user to back that up. This would hopefully be enough to enable their journey without fear of prosecution and satisfy the requirements of those enforcing the law.

If these 2 changes that I have mentioned above were somehow executed in the short term, this would personally enable some very positive significant changes to my quality of life and well-being without fear of breaking the law..... until the science catches up.

I thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.