

Submission
No 317

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 28 July 2024

Partially
Confidential

To Whoever It May Concern,

I fully support the legalisation of cannabis. I don't consume cannabis, never have, and should it be readily available for purchase, I still probably wouldn't. But I can see only positives for our society should it become legal and am growing frustrated with the Government's lack of action on this matter. My thoughts and opinions are below.

Economic Benefits

- Jobs. An entirely new industry will require workers all the way from production to retail. Local businesses akin to breweries will be given the opportunity to thrive in a market untouched by giant corporations.
- Taxes. The Pennington Institute finds that Australian's lifetime use of cannabis is up 26% in the past 20 years. With such a high demand, why is the Government not interested in taxing cannabis sales?
- Enforcement costs. It costs us \$3.5 billion per annum for anti-drug law enforcement. However, the use of illicit substances has grown considerably since 2001. The bulk of cannabis arrests are for small time uses, why continue to spend such a large amount of money and police resources on cannabis when it can be used elsewhere?
- Tourism. In 2022, Forbes shared that the industry of cannabis tourism in America was worth over \$17 billion USD. After legalisation, Colorado alone now sees an estimated \$1 billion USD annually in cannabis tourism. Again, why is the Government not interested in a giant boom in tourism, especially after Covid lockdowns all but destroyed the industry?

Health & Safety

- Regulation. A legal industry regulated by the Government will create a standard product which meets strict health and safety protocols. Products in a regulated industry must also adhere to proper labeling and dosage amounts, to better educate consumers on what they are purchasing and consuming. When I was in high school, some of my classmates purchased what they thought was cannabis from a drug dealer. It turned out to be a bag of lawnmower clippings. Who knows what chemicals and pesticides they inhaled into their lungs. But in a legal market, they would have known exactly what they were buying, and would have been refused sale in the first place for being minors.
- Removal of 'gateway'. It is oft preached that cannabis is a 'gateway' drug. I challenge this, and using my classmates as an example again, suggest that the only gateway is consumers being forced to enter a system that doesn't care about their health. A dealer has product to move and only cares about the bottom line. Once introduced to this criminal market, my poor classmates were then pressured to peruse a more dangerous selection of the seller's wares.
- Research. One unintended causality in the War On Drugs has been a critical lack into cannabis research. I'm not going to say its some wonder drug that cures everything it touches, but actual scientific research into its effects and medicinal value could now be fully explored, and funded for by the tax revenue it generates.

Crime

- Prohibition only benefits organised crime. America saw it in the 1920s with alcohol (which failed), and we are seeing it now with cannabis (which has also failed). The Pennington Institute estimated

that the illicit market in Australia is worth \$5 billion, and cannabis was described as the 'jet fuel' for organised crime by a senior police officer. The below is an excerpt taken from the Penington Institute's Cannabis Regulation in Australia (2004).

"The international community, including jurisdictions from the US and Canada, has changed direction

by taking cannabis out of the illicit drug equation. A regulated adult-use cannabis market allows consumers to buy from regulated access points, leading to diminished criminal markets and better community health and safety (see Section 5.2). For cannabis, regulation offers greater benefits than decriminalisation, which fails to address the criminal supply of drugs and the toxicity of unregulated products."

This alone should be more than enough evidence to legalise cannabis as soon as possible. I would hate to think my Government is acting in the best interests of criminals and not its law abiding citizens.

- Roadside Testing. The current system in testing presence instead of impairment is inherently flawed. The human body simply does not regulate cannabis the same as it does with alcohol, and it can remain present for up to a few weeks after consumption, despite any impairment lasting as long as that experienced from alcohol. Would you accept an RBT system that would mean you can't drive for up to two weeks after a few beers? This also actively discourages people from exploring medicinal cannabis options.

Recommendations

- Legalise cannabis and allow license holders to produce and sell regulated product.
- Introduce a new industry that local business owners are encouraged to join.
- Standardise plan-packaging and strict product composition (such as THC levels etc) in an easy-to-understand system, like standard drinks for alcohol.
- Prohibit all advertising until point of sale.
- Restrict sale to 21 and over.
- Introduce a RSC, similar to the current RSA, for all cannabis retailers.
- Tax fairly to ensure consumers don't turn back to the black market.
- Use tax revenue to fund public health services and research into cannabis.
- Remove roadside testing for presence, and introduce testing for impairment.
- Take the easy win and focus on more important legislation.

Cannabis has been legal for our friends in the Netherlands, Canada, America, Spain, and most recently Germany, and unless I missed something, the sky hasn't fallen over those select parts of the world. The country that started the War On Drugs has already conceded defeat, why are we still wasting money, time, and resources to fight on in vain?

Thank you for considering my submission.

Citations

Penington Institute (2024). Cannabis Regulation in Australia: Putting community safety first. Melbourne:

Penington Institute.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/willyakowicz/2022/05/29/cannabis-tourism-is-now-a-17-billion-industry-and-its-just-taking-off/?sh=fdae92320563>