



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis
Use) Amendment Bill 2018

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Submission in regards to Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Bill

I would like to advocate for the following:

1. Increased mental health funding, especially early intervention strategies but also crisis funding, to address the issues that may arise from being triggered by cannabis use.

2. Increased drug treatment funding, this could be via way of existing agencies such as Directions or through new providers. Focus again on early intervention, but also crisis treatment options.

2a. In regards to the treatment options available, I would like to advocate for the consideration of the establishment of a dedicated cannabis dependence clinic. This may be outpatient only and feature things such as counselling, group therapy, and other resources, but consideration should also be given to looking at a short term stay (1-4 weeks) inpatient aspect to the facility.

The reason for this is that existing drug rehab facilities in Canberra are geared around supporting quite different and arguably much more severe alcohol, amphetamines (ice) and heroin addictions, as well as long term treatment periods (3-12 months), and are not suited to someone seeking treatment for cannabis dependence.

By way of background, 7 years ago I sought help for cannabis dependence in Canberra. I ended up going through the hospital detox a number of times, spent 5 weeks in a residential rehab (karralika) until the point the environment was making me far more ill than I would be on my own and left. I then spent 6 months in a karralika d&a halfway house program, which was a lot closer to suitable but still far from ideal.

Karralika had no experience with treating someone with cannabis dependence, I was a rare oddity to them. I know from that experience that existing drug treatment facilities in Canberra are ill suited to helping people with cannabis dependence issues.

I think there is going to become a clear need for this type of dedicated facility for cannabis dependence if we legalise cannabis, and I would like to see this implemented from day 1 of the legislation, instead of waiting 12-36 months before a problem becomes more clearly evident in society at that point.

I don't have the medical data to prove everything I am suggesting, but I am confident there are others much more experienced who can add weight and validity to these suggestions.

All I can say is that as a cannabis user, who also has mental health conditions, albeit I medicate with cannabis for that mental health condition (autism) as opposed to cannabis caused my condition, having sought drug treatment and mental health treatment in Canberra myself, I know our current facilities and systems are not adequately set up for what will be really needed if we legalise cannabis.

Whilst many in the population will use recreationally with little to no ill effects, we need to be ready to cater for those who may have medical issues around cannabis once it is legalised.

3. That under the bill cannabis plants be allowed to be grown indoors, using artificial lights, heaters, and hydroponic systems, as well as outdoors. This is to ensure equity for all residents, not all of whom have backyards to access. This is also to negate the need to grow a large amount in a short time during the narrow outdoor yearly growing season, to then stockpile cannabis for the rest of the year, allowing year round growth indoors or in outdoor greenhouses.

4. That a maximum of two plants per person be allowed, not four, presuming indoor growth is allowed and growing all year round is possible rather than the need to stockpile. That further a household cap of 10 plants be put in place, do discourage the attraction of grow houses by criminals.

5. That the maximum allowed amount of cannabis to possess be increased to 150-200 grams, given that a yield of up to a 100 grams per plant is quite reasonable for even a smallish size plant grown well, and users will be growing at least two plants at a time.

6. Supports the provision to allow cannabis to be legally given away (although not sold) to other adults over 18 years, as long as no transaction has actually taken place in terms of trade or money in receipt for the cannabis. Where someone legally gives some cannabis away in order to avoid being over the maximum possession limit, this should be taken into account by police when they encounter a user with only slightly over the legal limit, in terms of deciding whether to lay charges or not.