

27/02/2015

## **Submission for the 'Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014'**

Dear Committee Delegates,

I am inspired and proud to see the rapid progression of the medicinal cannabis movement within Australia. Thank you for making such a collaborative effort.

This issue has closely affected me as one of my immediate family members struggles with an illness that requires a very intensive treatment program. It has become very apparent that cannabis provides a significant relief to the negative side effects of the treatment. This is in part, why I am an advocate of medicinal marijuana in Australia.

However I truly believe the potential for cannabis to be utilised as a solution to a larger range of problems within society. The vague differentiation between 'medicinal' and 'recreational' leads to a misunderstanding of the many uses for cannabis and cannabis products. It is absurd that if a users particular need for cannabis it is not on a list of ailments suggested by an 'expert' than it is not medicinal use. Many of my friends and colleagues utilise cannabis for a vast range of positive purposes, i.e. social interaction (as a healthy alternative to alcohol), appetite stimulation, relationship therapy, for a good nights sleep, to help creativity and the list goes on. I'm yet to meet a cannabis user that is harming any individuals or groups around them.

With the current ice, (or methamphetamine), problem that exists in Victoria, cannabis could provide an effective means of harm minimisation. It is apparent from looking to previous studies completed in America that cannabis use in rehabilitation of harder drugs benefits in treatment completion, criminal justice involvement and reduces medical concerns.<sup>1</sup> As passionate gardener, I also believe that the therapeutic benefits of growing and consuming cannabis would reduce the impact that ice currently controls in Victoria.

I wish to draw comparison to the recent Ballot becoming effective in Alaska, to end prohibition. The societal benefits are powerful and this ballot ensures cannabis consumption, like alcohol, is dictated by individual maturity and responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Swartz, R "**Medical marijuana users in substance abuse treatment**" Department of Social Work, Humboldt State University.

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In Alaska, the recent bill has removed the outdated concept of prohibition entirely. Dr. Tim Hinterberg wrote “It will be lawful for someone 21 years of age or over to possess up to 1 ounce of marijuana. Those with a green thumb may legally grow up to six marijuana plants in their homes. Generous Alaskans may gift, without payment, up to 1 ounce of marijuana to someone age 21 or over and give them up to six immature marijuana plants.”

By removing the financial element of personal cannabis trading, this ensures criminal activity is minimalized and individuals can be responsible for the quality and strength of their own product.

I truly believe that this flower has the ability to assist our society and provide an alternative to our heavy drinking culture in Australia. I appreciate that any substance, whether legal or not, has the potential to be abused by individuals and it is imperative that we provide an effective education program so that adult Australians can make educated and responsible decisions. The financial, cultural, societal and health benefits that a single plant can provide could allow Australia to set a new global benchmark in effective harm minimization and regulation. Not to mention the potential revenue from exportation and the cannabis industry in general.

It is logical for you to ensure that the licensing program suggested and controlled by the regulator does not rule out the average Australian from benefiting from cannabis. It is baffling that an outdated concept like prohibition has survived for this long and we are only just waking up to the problems it has caused.

I am truly passionate about this issue and I am happy to voice my opinions or answer any questions that may be relevant to this submission. Thank you for taking the time to consider my opinion on this matter.

Inspire change. Plant the seed.

Warm regards,

Thomas Forrest