

Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023 – Parliament of Australia

DALGARNO INSTITUTE SUBMISSION



Shane Varcoe – Executive Director

DALGARNO INSTITUTE | PO BOX 7005, DANDENONG, VICTORIA, 3175

To the **Committee Secretariat**

C/o Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au
19/10/2023

Dalgarno Institute Submission to Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023 – Parliament of Australia

Bill Summary: Establishes the Cannabis Australia National Agency as a statutory agency to register cannabis strains and regulate activities relating to cannabis including: growing and possessing cannabis plants; manufacturing and selling cannabis products; operating cannabis cafes; and importing and exporting cannabis products.

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on an extremely important issue that will shape this nation's drug policy for generations. Dalgarno Background Dalgarno Institute has over 150 years' experience with alcohol and other drug issues, including counselling, educating, and researching around the subject of cannabis.

Our long-standing organisation has been at the forefront of demand reduction and primary prevention strategies. It has engaged with clients from a wide cross section of demographic and socio-economic communities who have shared their experiences, narratives, and outcomes of drug abuse. When it comes to the illicit substance genre, the overwhelming majority of these individuals either started with or remain dependent on cannabis.

Principally, policy should always be judged by the impact to the wider community with a particular focus on its foreseeable health and wellbeing outcomes to its citizenry. With this in mind, this submission will show how proponents of increased promotion and permission models for illicit drugs must persistently:

- Deny evidence-based science,
- Ignore best health-care practice, and
- Attempt to minimise harms by emphasising the fiscal benefits of potential tax revenues.

The Dalgarno Institute continue to express both serious concern and strong opposition to any legislative mechanism that enables cannabis, a psychotropic toxin, into the currents of trade.

The substances that continue to inflict the most harm to our community social, mental, and physical health and well-being are the legal substances. Granting cannabis, the same social permission status will only escalate use and the attending harms such permission and promotion will afford. The consumption equation is irrefutable; *Increasing accessibility, acceptability and availability all increase consumption.*

The following list provides a snapshot of those harms. Most of which can be found in the *Cannabis & Hemp Scientific Review*, research analysis ¹

- Cannabis is now known to be both [Genotoxic](#) ² and [Neurotoxic](#) ³
- Both cannabis intoxication and withdrawal have been linked with violence and homicide including mass shootings
- Effects on developing brains
- Effects on [driving](#) ⁴
- Effects on developmental trajectory and failure to attain normal adult goals (stable relationship, work, education)
- Effects on withdrawal and sleep deprivation⁵
- Effects on IQ and IQ regression
- Effects to increase numerous psychiatric and psychological disorders.
- Effects on respiratory system
- Effects on reproductive system
- Effects in relation to immunity and immunosuppression
- Effects of now very concentrated forms of cannabis, THC and CBD which are widely available.
- Outdated epidemiological studies are cited but apply only to the era before cannabis became so potent and so concentrated.
- At the cellular level cannabis and cannabinoids have been linked with decreased energy production from mitochondria
- Increased production of inflammation and reduced antioxidant defence
- Reduced enzymes involved in DNA repair; and increased errors of mitosis which occur due to disruption of the tubulin 'rails' of the mitotic spindle in such a way that chromosomes become left behind and eventually shatter under cellular stress.
- Cannabis also stimulates the carcinogenic oncoproteins tumour protein isoform2 and tumour protein.
- Stimulation of lipoygenase and thromboxane synthase can lead to clotting and coagulation.
- As a gateway drug leading to other drug use including the opioids ⁶

Agency: Regulation and Enforcement (Policing by any other name)

Whilst promoting a diminishing of criminal prosecutions simply by the removing a criminal statute from the *books* may see decline in one policing metric, it however, will (as evidence is mounting other jurisdictions) will not reduce policing.

Unlawful or civic harming actions and activities as a result of use of a psychotropic toxin i.e., Delta 9 THC laden Cannabis, will ensure the need for ongoing policing, not for 'possession or use', but for behavioural outcomes of such consumption. Even if one were to then continue removing statues of community protection from the policing framework, will not reduce the harms of these behaviours, only enable them with impunity. The fiscal cost, though more difficult to record, will not decrease, but it's the psycho-social harms and all their attending healthcare demands that will only increase. This for any reasonable government under a Westminster framework is not only contra to best practice, but one could argue, culpable.

However, the regulating and this new industry will require a level of bureaucratic monitoring that will, as we are seeing in other jurisdictions, take more and more financial and human resources to oversee.

The proposed Cannabis Australia National Agency will not escape these problematic and expensive realities, as other jurisdictions have experienced – even after being advised by pro-cannabis activists and industries that such eventualities would not arise, and a [wealth of revenue would result](#).⁷

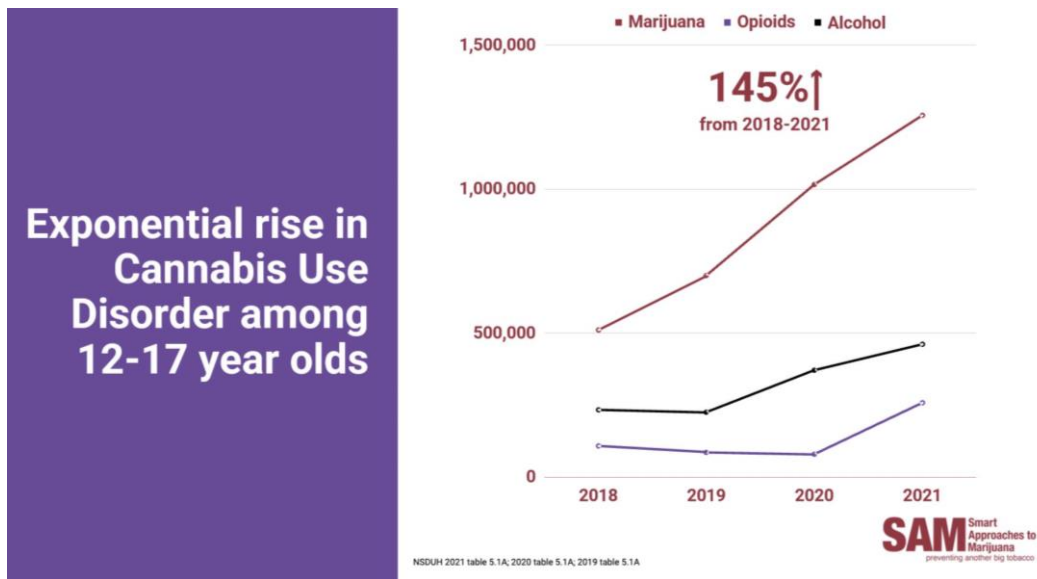
Predicted and now current realities have shown that promised revenues have not eventuated and what little has been generated has been [consumed by growing public health issues and expensive bureaucracies](#)⁸, not to mention the escalation of [drug use related crimes beyond the 'possession and use' issue](#).⁹

Very recently released research from Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas discovered the following.

“We find moderate economic gains accompanied by some social costs. Post-legalization, average state income grew by 3 percent, house prices by 6 percent, and population by 2 percent. However, substance use disorders, chronic homelessness, and arrests increased by 17, 35, and 13 percent, respectively. The estimate for overall arrests shows that legalization significantly increases total arrests by 465 arrests per capita per year, a 12.8 percent increase relative to the mean arrest rate under no legalization... legalization increased both violent and property crime related arrests by 18 and 15 percent relative to the meant arrest rate under no legalization.... only 8% reduction in drug offense arrests, 23% reduction in mj possession arrests, but a 10% increase in dui arrests and 18% disorderly conduct...”¹⁰

USA Legalisation: ongoing problematic Issues (a sample)

- [Data Driven Policy – No State has been successful in Cannabis Legalization](#)
- [THC – The Human Consequences of Legalization](#)
- [Up In Smoke – California Legalization Disaster](#)
- [Then There Were Three – Marijuana Markets](#)
- [The Economic & Social Costs of Marijuana: Colorado](#)
- [New Study Outlines Public Health Impacts of Marijuana Legalization: USA](#)
- [University students' grades plunge when cannabis is legalised](#)
- [Colorado - A Post Legalisation Summary](#)



Canada: Legalisation: ongoing problematic Issues (a sample)

- [Canadian Cannabis Legalisation Experiment – 5 Years on and the Chaos and Carnage Grows](#)
- *“Canada now has one of the highest youth cannabis rates in the World.”*
- *“Experts say it’s time Canadian Government treat cannabis more like tobacco!”*
- Watch breakdown on Research Report [Canada's cannabis chaos 5 years on \(legislative-review-cannabis-act-report.pdf\)](#)
- [Canada has made a huge mistake in legalising recreational cannabis – it’s a gateway to serious addiction](#)

Further Research & Data (small sample)

- [UN: Legalizing cannabis fails to address health risks UN drugs control board.](#)
- [Genotoxicity and Neurotoxicity of Cannabis: 66th CND – Vienna UN 2023](#)
- [Cannabis: The case against legalisation](#)
- [Cannabis and Schizophrenia: Implications in the Legalization Era](#)

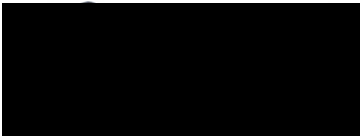
- [Smoking cannabis DOES make people more violent: Project confirms for the first time that using the drug is the cause of crimes](#)
- [Huge surge in black-market cannabis trade and organised crime in California DESPITE drug being legalised, cops reveal in warning to UK](#)
- [Cannabis & Youth Homelessness](#)
- [Permission Models are 'Poisonous' Models – The impact of cannabis legalization and decriminalization on acute poisoning: A systematic review](#)
- [Legalizing Cannabis Sends a Faux Message of 'Safety' & Promotes Addiction](#)
- [Cannabis Industry Can't Compete with Continuing Illegal Markets](#)
- [Dark Side of California's Marijuana Policy](#)
- [Victorian Parliamentary inquiry into Cannabis – an Exercise in Better Public Health Promotion or Manufacturing Consensus for Promoting Permission?](#)

This brief submission is a mere sample of evidence relating to the undeniable harms of cannabis. It is imperative that governments do not step into the space of being the overseers of production, supply, and promotion of this drug for *recreational* purposes.

The inevitability of three markets emerging from this move – *Legal, Grey, and Illicit* – are already a clear reality in other jurisdictions. To believe this and other growing harms will not happen in our nation is not simple naivety, it is a wilful ignoring of the data. However, once in play will be hard to shift. As difficult to shift as we saw in previous eras, [taking scores of years to excise that drug from the currents of trade.](#)

Thank you again for taking the time to thoroughly review all the data, research, examples and attached documentation. Please lay aside any confirmation bias as you review, and subsequently allow it to inform your decision to *not proceed with the passing of this bill.*

Yours for better community health, well-being, and resilience.



Shane Varcoe - Executive Director

Endnotes

1. [Cannabis and Hemp Scientific Review.pdf](#)
2. <https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/advocacy/isabella-s-list-updates/1532-genotoxic-portfolio-of-cannabis-info-sheet>
3. <https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/resources/cannabis-conundrum/2015-genotoxicity-and-neurotoxicity-of-cannabis-66th-cnd-vienna-un-2023>
4. <https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/resources/research-reports/1655-medical-cannabis-driving-is-it-an-issue-drr>
5. <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/kicking-pot-habit-lead-withdrawal/story?id=17333197>
6. <https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/resources/research-reports/1608-cannabis-gateway-drr-15-october-2021> and <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/135554/20160222/smoking-marijuana-gateway-to-alcohol-addiction-abuse-of-other-drugs.htm>
7. [Legalize cannabis and a veritable cornucopia will emerge.](#)
8. [Legalizing cannabis will reduce crime and raise Tax revenue...](#)
9. [Attacker Smoked Cannabis: suicide and psychotic violence](#)
10. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/Research%20Working%20Papers/documents/9825/rwp23-10browncohenfelix.pdf>