

To the Committee,

Since coming across an article in the West Australian, I have pondered, and read extensively about illicit drugs and how we are dealing with these in our wider community. I must admit I have some doubts about the value of another drugs summit. I say this not because I think what we are doing now is adequate, which it is not, but I think that after the recommendations reached by the committee are not implemented, but are written off by our politicians as unsuitable, and dismissed. This has happened many times in the past, and I'm sure will happen again in the future. What has to be understood is drugs are a part of society, and whatever steps are taken, there will always be a small proportion of the population that will take mind-altering substances. This is inherent in the nature of man. Trying to segregate these people is not only prejudiced, but foolish. There becomes a dense jungle of legal issues, family issues, and health issues that are not covered, or addressed by locking these people away. Resources are drawn away from more important areas, which could benefit. Stricter prohibition is not an answer, drugs have been on the hit list since very early this century, and yet the problem grows. The streets of our cities are awash with drugs. Legalization in any sense would not increase drug use, they are already there for the taking. But, I ask you this, why are our young people taking these drugs?. What is the underlying factor in drug use? Is it the drugs that lead to problems of crime, premature death, or are these just the side effects of *illegal* drug use.

More often social problems, family problems, lack of purpose, depression, unemployment are some reasons people turn to drugs. The drugs themselves are often portrayed as the initiator to social problems. Crime, and especially violent crime are linked to drug use in a high percentage of cases. Mostly to support a \$100 a day habit. We as outsiders, turn and blame the drugs, outlaw the drugs and everything will be back to normal. This is the all too common view. Ban the drugs, no problem. It worked with the guns, or did it?. Unfortunately, as I will mention, this view is not correct. Many people with problems find drugs are an alternative to dealing with what society has become. People with domestic family issues, legal issues, parents struggling to live on meager incomes, and general frustration at the world in which we live. Support is just not there in the real world. People feel frustrated at not being listened to, not being able to do what they want to do. Freedoms are being readily wiped out, at an alarming rate. With all the ironies in the world, we have created the biggest one of all. People turn to drugs for something different, a break from the norm. Unfortunately, propaganda tells us drugs are bad, not to take them. People are not as ignorant as some would like to believe. Our young people are finding that drugs are fun, when what the informative authorities are saying is that they are not. Why wouldn't they find out for themselves. They cannot trust what is being told to them, and experimentation tells them it's false. This is where the problems start, for our young drug users. Studies show the initial step to heroin is from alcohol. Alcohol is freely available to anyone, hopefully over 18, and even advertised. Tobacco, the same, although the advertising has stopped. People who will do drugs will choose their drugs carefully. When all drugs are illegal, people will often take what they can get. Quality control in street drugs is non-existent, hence hospitals begin to play their part. Heroin overdoses are common, but ironically not as common as overdose from prescribed medicines, whether deliberate or not. By allowing a wider freedom for educated people to choose their drugs, and by adopting a different policy to the drug problem, many of these harms will stop. Information has become a powerful weapon over the past few years. Denial, of information is also just as powerful.

There has been more than one occasion that the policies of this country have been compared to that of the United States and other countries. It would also not be untrue in saying that the policies of the USA have influenced decisions in this country, in the past and in the future, and probably more than any person will admit. There is more than one problem with this situation, and do not work in their country of origin. I talk about the American “War on Drugs”, With the winning of the Cold War, the war on drugs continues to become more militarized, with more resources and government funding more and more Americans are finding themselves incarcerated for minor drug offences. This does more harm than the drugs themselves. The Dutch government went in opposition to this stand, in accepting drug use. Although not legal, Marijuana may be grown for sale in coffee shops, personal use, and for industrial uses. After twenty years since this experiment started, Use of “Hard drugs”, like heroin, amphetamines, cocaine has decreased with the mean age of users rising. The cultural aspects in accepting pot have made other drugs seem taboo. Marijuana is classed as a soft drug. With all its uses it should be a crime not to grow it, the intoxicant is a bonus. Another example, Mexico has little drug policy, all manor of medicines are available over the counter, usually at a doctors recommendation, yet there is little abuse.

Alcohol and tobacco have long been accepted as social drugs even with the odds stacked against them. Combined they lead statistics in mortality rates. Diseases related to lung, heart, vascular, mouth and throat cancers, liver cancers pour through the health care system. For this, the taxes raised of alcohol and tobacco pay. Alcohol advertising is saturating the media at the moment, along side the adds, not to ‘drink and drive’. At present we have to be eighteen years and over to buy Alcohol, generally from a store specific for this purpose. For prescription pills, we go to a doctor. There have never been any recorded overdoses on cannabis, there has never been a traffic fatality where cannabis along was the culprit. Cannabis use does not lead to hard drug use, and a recent study shows the first link in stepping into harder drugs is the demon alcohol. In fact many people who use cannabis, do not like heroin. There are thousands of deaths every year attributable to legal drug use and abuse. The great majority of these are from tobacco and alcohol related diseases. Prescription medicines are high on the list. Total deaths due to illegal drugs, including heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, PCP and cannabis, still make up only a small percentage of the total. If all the illegal drugs were removed, those people will by just as dead, but by socially acceptable and legal means. Cannabis compared to what is legally available is a far safer alternative, with less side effects. The most serious side effect is arrest by police. Which is more often than not, more traumatic to the individual than by the drug itself.

Penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself.

President Jimmy Carter, October 2, 1977

The road trauma statistics are plastered all over news after another death due to speed, drugs or alcohol. Cost’s to community are also stated, although less frequently. How are these costs measured?, as not everything can be derived to a number. Yet most of the time many people still find rational in being responsible. Workers don’t generally drink at work, or work drunk. Even smoking is being frowned upon more and more. But, there are always exceptions. Drugs are often found in the workplace. Responsibility for this is generally with the working body. But employers are finding it more and more a prerequisite to conduct drug tests of their staff. This total invasion of privacy is seek nothing more than to stop the use of

drugs, or illegal drugs. Prescription medicines are not targeted, yet they can produce similar side effects. Rather, if the employee is found hindered in his performance, and cannot do the job, drug testing should be a last resort approach. Although technology is very good, false results do occur. Labeling someone, with something he may have never done causes tension and unnecessary embarrassment, if later proved wrong. Many drugs stay in the system several days after the dose. Could the results be conclusive on urine metabolites days after the dose, when the worker is no longer under any influence?. The consequences for him may be. Hangovers are usually laughed off as a good night out, but are often just as dangerous at work. Maybe if tobacco and alcohol came today through the scrutiny of the Food and Drug Administration, they too would be banned. A different approach to drug legislation and drug use is necessary.

Drug use has been knowingly associated with mankind since first recorded history. The first plant cultivated by man was the hemp plant. The hemp plant would have to be described as the finest most useful member of the plant kingdom. It can supply us with a superior cellulose fibre for paper and cloth, can be distilled as a clean burning fuel, The seed can be used for fuel oil and food, used minimal herbicides and pesticides, why is it then illegal?. The use of psychedelics has been ingrained in the culture of the native Indian cultures for hundreds of years. Today having been accepted by the United States as part of their religion, are the only people allowed to possess the Peyote cactus. Indian tribes of the amazonian rain forest utilise tryptamine containing barks, to induce religious visions. The ancient Aztecs and native indians of Mexico, and South America have used coca to boost stamina, and combat fatigue. Use of psilocybe containing mushrooms in religious ceremonies, has been dated back thousands of years. Cultures were based around worship of these sacred mushrooms. These cultures still live on, despite efforts of those wishing to ban all such practices. Through all efforts to eradicate the hemp plant in all its forms, it lives and thrives underground, in basements and areas concealed to prying eyes. Legislation that would, not legalise totally, but accept as the plant for what it is could go a long way to solving the drug problems. The questions "if we legalise it, it shows it's not harmful" and "if it's legal everyone will be taking drugs" are easily answered, just not easily accepted. There will probably be a small increase for a time before settling around the current rate. There will not be any more smokers, just as not everyone drinks, and tobacco smoking rates are falling.

Sir Joseph Banks arriving with the first fleet introduced hemp seeds to Australia. Hemp was grown in Australia, and actively supported by governments until 1938. In these early years cannabis was in widespread use in paper production, cloth, oil for food and fuels. It was found popular in medicine, and as a mild intoxicant. In the early years, tobacco was expensive, and was often, mixed with the plentiful hemp by members of the lower classes. Varieties of hemp were grown for a variety of products, in these early years we didn't have the problems we have now. By these I mean, the greenhouse effects, pollution and contamination by fertilizers and pesticides, soil erosion, and many needless law enforcement and court hours wasted for possession of this wonderful plant. Non drug varieties have appeared, that can grow up to several inches per day.

As we progress through this new century, more and more demand is being placed on our environment. Now is the time when we are realising that "It'll never happen" is just not covering it. Record amounts of carbon dioxide is being pumped into the air by industry, our cars, our used of fossil fuels has never really been challenged. Trees and native forests are being cleared at enormous rates. In the last century, more has happened

to our planet in the way of degradation than in the previous 1000 years. What does the future hold??. Do we continue on this path of self destruction until there is nothing left ????. We are already seeing massive climatic change from what we have done. What is the price or point of having a rich country, if the air is toxic to its residents. A three-degree rise in global temperature could cause whole species to die out, the barrier reef is dying at the moment. Polar ice melts could see our seas rise, swamping cities. But "It'll never happen". Maybe it won't happen in our lifetime, but is that all we care about?. What about a plan longer than 2 years down the track?.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of trees are cleared for wood pulp. This pulp is then processed using toxic chemicals to make paper. The fibres are not long or strong enough by themselves, so to make this pulp into anything useful, fibre stock has to be imported to reinforce the produced paper. This removal of trees is slowly becoming a biological disaster, as this resource grab continues. To make a high grade of paper, high amounts of processing are necessary, and generally this paper lasts around 70 years. Paper made from the hemp plant, is far superior, needs no reinforcing, little chemical processing using already available technology, and will last over a thousand years. The hemp plant is a renewable resource. Taking three months on average till harvest producing four times the amount of high quality fibre on an acre/acre basis than lower grade wood fibre that takes 150 years to mature. This harvested fibre can then be used to make anything from pressed article boards, paper, coarse fibre mats, to materials indistinguishable from silk by steam processing. Hemp is the most durable of the natural fibres, with a 200% yield per acre than cotton, without the use of pesticides. The cotton industry is the most heavily dependent on fertilisers and pesticides of all Australia's crops. Many of our water ways are suffering from the use or over use of these fertilisers and pesticides, our soil is becoming toxic, this in turn affects the air we breathe and what we eat. The Murray River is polluted to an extent that large amounts of money and energy are now being used to try to save the water system. Yet cotton farms along the Murray still operate at full steam ahead, producing polychlorobenzenes, dioxins, and other cancer producing substances. This is shown throughout the country where farms run along waterways. Are we in the business of supporting the chemical industry?. Why would we support an industry that is inefficient, promotes pollution, uses high rates chemicals known to be toxic to soil and surrounding eco systems, only to produce a low yield of a poor quality fibre. Hemp fibre is far superior, uses little chemicals, has far higher yields over wood fibre and cotton for fewer costs, and requires fewer chemicals to process.

Hemp is finding support among those producers and users of composites. Composite particleboards made from hemp are two to three times stronger than equivalent wood fibreboards. Hemp has also found uses as auto body panels and surfboards. This is due to the long 2-3 foot fibres found on the hemp stalks, which consist of approx 77% cellulose. In contrast tree fibres are 3/4 inches long and are inferior to hemp fibre in all respects.

The high cellulose content in the hemp plant can be distilled to ethanol. Currently most ethanol is obtained from sugar cane. Since the advent of the internal combustion engine, petroleum products have become a way of life. Every few kilometres in any city there is a fuel station. Petroleum products are a major contributor to the greenhouse effect, respiratory problems and cancers. The petrol internal combustion engine has been outdated technology for 50 years, why then haven't we seen any improvements take off into full-scale production. The burning of petrol produces a black sooty type smoke laden with toxins, many living in cities will tell any who ask what effect it has. Engines using

alcohol as a fuel have been around for decades, Racing cars use methanol, Brazil has been using distilled ethanol for its motor vehicles for years. And is far better than the toxic petrol alternative. Engines run on alcohol are cleaner, show less wear, and produce far fewer toxic emissions. An alcohol run engine was pulled down after 35,000 miles showing only minimal grime, a similar petrol engine would show thick soot deposits. By using ethanol even as an additive shows significant decreases in exhaust emissions. A 10% ethanol mix in petrol reduces emissions by 25-30%. As a 15% blend in diesel vehicles reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 40%, smoke by 50% and 10% lower nitrate emissions than by using diesel alone. Ethanol from biomass is best from fast growing plants that are high in cellulose and low in lignin. Hemp is renewable, oil is not. Again I ask, why are we continuing with an industry that is poisoning us, is it change we are afraid of or is the concept of big business and the dollar the overriding factor.

Many regions of the world rely on the seed of the hemp plant as a primary food source. Hemp has a 40% combustible oil content, having a complete balance of amino acids, is high in protein and second only to the soybean in nutritional value. Seeds are essentially drug free. The oil itself is an edible alternative for lanterns, a diesel substitute. Has been used as a base for paints, cosmetics and is high in cholesterol reducing omega 3 fatty acids.

Since the advent of aspirin, pharmaceutical companies have become billion dollar giants with a drug for almost every ache, and whim. Billions of dollars of research is done every year to invent new drugs. If we feel sick we take a tablet, although many of these refined drugs have side effects, and it's only been in the last 50 years that pharmaceutical products have advanced to this high level. Hemp has been used for thousands of years as a medicine. 90% of Cancer patients find relief from nausea induced by chemotherapy, patients with AIDS find relief from their wasting disease, in pregnancy it is used to increase uterine contractions and decrease labour pains. Is the most effective drug for glaucoma, and many a person has had their sight saved by using this ancient medicine. It also finds applications in reducing muscle spasms, and pain in para/quadruplegics, in multiple sclerosis, asthma, epilepsy, as a topical antibiotic/analgesic, and as an intoxicant. As a drug itself, it is debatable that it is one of the safest. Go into a pharmacy, and one can get a multitude of drugs to treat all number of ills. There are drugs for the heart, lungs, joints, skin, everything. The synthetic version of THC was marketed by pharmaceutical companies,... why?. Reports from users tell that it doesn't work as well, as an appetite stimulant, or antiemetic. Why was it even attempted at all when the real thing is easier to grow. We grow poppies for opium, why not government marijuana fields?. I'm sure the U.S government would have something to say about that. Drugs for the expansion of the mind, are never seen. The topic seems taboo with all are approached by it. The law tells us that all variants to hallucinogens are banned. Psilocybe, LSD, MDMA, DMT, DOM, Mescaline and others have in the past played various roles in psychotherapy and psychopharmacology and most often religious ceremony. Yet they are not even looked as a potential class of drugs. Many compounds to treat so-called disorders of the mind, are often based on neurotransmitter chemicals, and those that have shown activity. DMT and LSD are structurally similar to tryptophan and serotonin, MDMA and DOM, similar to dopamine. Both have role in mood regulation. Is it honestly that these chemicals are too dangerous, or is it because freedom to explore the domain inside of us is being denied. Many pharmaceutical preparations have side effects in some people. These sometimes require hospitalization and are even lethal. Why are they different?. Instead shoppers in mind expansion are restricted to black market chemists whose purity is questionable, exacerbating health and legal problems.

As the war on drugs has been scaled up, millions of dollars every year is spent on policing this most useful plant. There are more police officers, more funds for searching houses, harassment of individuals, and further degradation of human rights. We are still awash with illicit drugs, cannabis being used more and more as the drug of choice by many people. Many people who don't drink alcohol, may wish to relax, and don't want to mess with heroin. There are escalating problems with amphetamine use, heroin is becoming cheaper, and black markets thrive under prohibition.. There will always be a section of the community that will experiment with drugs. Prohibition in all forms has never worked. The United States is a prime example of this. Their modern day war on drugs affects more people's lives than any other, and currently has the highest prison per capita population of the western world. The prohibition years of earlier this century was found to be a complete failure, many wasted lives, tax dollars to achieve what?. Legalisation two years later. One wonders if the legalisation of alcohol was the initial nail in the hemp coffin. One of the prime instigators of the prohibition of hemp was the appointment of Harry J. Ainslinger as Commissioner of the newly created U.S. Narcotics Bureau. After a successful propaganda scare campaign, by 1937 Cannabis was outlawed in forty-six of the forty eight states. From here came the world, having by 1961 achieved in getting sixty nations to sign a "Uniform drug convention", which pledged the end of the evil weed in twenty-five years. Ainslingers, crackdown against came at a time where prohibition had ended, and there were a lot of officers with little to do. Another evil needed their attention. It is also interesting to note, around the same time as the DuPont company had released Nylon, which would have been threatened by the hemp industry for ropes and cloth.

Since being outlawed there has been a constant struggle to effect reform, and right the wrongs of prohibition. Why is drug law reform still lagging behind?, a political bouncing ball. So many advantages will be realised. A new industry in secondary products from locally grown hemp would do a lot to release burdens on our lands, our forests, our courts, and our sick. The only advantage in not changing this law is what we have now, which is not working. Rather than committing more resources, we should be releasing resources to deal with matters more urgent. Cannabis dealers would become a thing of the past, there is no need on an open market. Personal use growers would be tolerated. Licenses similar to fishing licenses could be issued without restriction to raise government revenue. Cotton farms converted to non-drug hemp farms. Instead of in every grocery store like tobacco, specialized shops to deal with the clientele, similar to pubs with alcohol. Places selling alcohol should be prohibited from selling cannabis. Pharmaceutical grade heroin in safe environments, for users that have failed other means. It's proved successful in Switzerland, why not here?. Non punishable quantities of drugs for personal use. People should not be punished for experimentation, but educated in what and how to do it safely. Many a person has attributed a famous book, painting, song while under the influence of various substances. Drugs under a tolerating scheme will not become a bigger problem than they are now, a slight increase as people experiment, only to return to its current level. People who do not use drugs will continue not to use, whether legal or not. The prohibition, if anything serves to increase experimentation, especially in the young and vulnerable. Education, not propaganda should be free to anyone who wishes to view. Help should be available to those who need, not only those than can pay. The people of Australia are crying out for change, oppression is a drying concept. With change, all will benefit.

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