

“CANNABIS MESSAGES WITH YOUR MIND” CAMPAIGN

Statement by Minister for Mental Health

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [3.04 pm]: Today I have launched a new state government-funded campaign aimed at increasing awareness about the risks associated with cannabis use among parents and young people who use, or are thinking of using, cannabis. The state government has committed \$1 million over four years to this campaign, and for the first time in WA it includes an additional Aboriginal cannabis prevention campaign. The campaign message is that “Cannabis Messages With Your Mind”. It was developed by the Drug and Alcohol Office in partnership with the Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, and highlights the serious misconception in the community that cannabis is a harmless drug.

Two recent surveys conducted by *The West Australian* newspaper and the Drug and Alcohol Office showed that most people believed occasional or regular cannabis use was acceptable, finding that one in three Western Australians believes that cannabis can be used without any negative effects. As the minister responsible for mental health and the Drug and Alcohol Office, I find this news particularly disturbing. Cannabis is not a harmless drug, with one in 10 people who have used cannabis being at risk of dependence. Research shows that cannabis use can increase the risk of mental health problems, especially in young people, with one in seven cannabis users experiencing mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Teenagers aged 13 to 17 years who use cannabis are three times more likely to experience depression compared with those who do not, and the risk of mental health problems increases the earlier they start and the more they use. The most recent national drug strategy household survey released in July showed that 13.4 per cent of Western Australians aged 14 years and over had used cannabis in the past year compared with the national average of 10.3 per cent.

The “Cannabis Messages With Your Mind” campaign includes in-venue, radio, outdoor, press and online banner advertising. In addition, radio advertisements designed for Aboriginal people will be run in regional and metropolitan areas.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.