

Submission to the Inquiry into Cannabis and Hemp.

I would like to submit my views and experiences of the subculture of cannabis as I have witnessed since first becoming involved in the early 1970's. I am 66 years of age, served in our military forces and have been gainfully employed in middle management positions until my retirement in 2017.

My first experience with cannabis was during the early years of my enlistment in the R.A.N. when I found that quiet a few of my fellow navy friends were using cannabis recreationally on shore leave. I would like to add that I never experienced cannabis use on bases or ships during my time serving in the RAN.

We were often exposed to cannabis while on shore leave in quiet a few countries that we visited during deployments. However, in most countries at that time the penalties for possessing even small amounts of cannabis could involve lengthy prison terms or even the death sentence so partaking of cannabis was a no brainer, you just did not do it!

Not only was my exposure to cannabis restricted to navy or other military personnel, quiet a few civilian friends and members of my own family were regular users of cannabis and still are to this day with some holding down high demanding jobs and running their own successful businesses with no detrimental effect to their livelihoods or success in raising families of well adjusted and successful children, who some I might add have used or still use cannabis recreationally.

In the late 1990's a very dear friend and neighbor who was a senior police officer, retired a Chief Inspector, and who has sadly passed away informed me that the laws pertaining to cannabis were (in his words), "totally unpoliceable as the number of cannabis users in W.A. was that great that the police force could not control it." However, these ineffective laws are still in use today showing I believe the total exercise in futility of these laws.

In recent years I have met more people using cannabis for health reasons, myself included. These people for years were obtaining cannabis or growing it and running the risk of prosecution by law enforcement and receiving a criminal record, hefty fines, jail time or loosing their jobs just to get a medicine that worked for them as there was no legal avenue to obtain it. Even with the medical cannabis laws now in effect the price of the medicine puts it far out of reach of most people, especially those on a fixed income, so they must resort to growing it themselves exposing themselves to prosecution and a criminal record with the current ineffectual laws.

In the past W.A. and other states have experimented with easing restrictions on the possession of cannabis by allowing 'X' number of plants per household to be grown semi legally. However invariably with the change of governments these 'experiments' have been terminated due to some politicians' personal whim or belief, or a government has its hands tied because of the whim of its leader. Again, an example of exercises in futility.

The arguments put up by people in government and law enforcement to keep this herb illegal are every day getting more ridiculous as we see more countries realizing the prohibition of cannabis does not work and are opening up their economies to not only a financial boom, but easing work loads on their law enforcement agencies and prison systems. Upholding these laws are exercises in futility.

In conclusion I understand that my experiences are not unique, and many people have similar experiences. I have been following this subject for many years and cannot find anything negative from using cannabis other than the penalties enforced upon us from politicians for no other reason than “If you cannot control ‘it’, you ban ‘it’”. Controlling cannabis would not be that difficult, there are plenty of examples from other countries how it can be done correctly and incorrectly. Let us be intelligent in our approach and put personal convictions aside for a healthier, more liberated and enlightened society.

Suggestions:

1. Hold a referendum on the issue of cannabis decriminalization to get a better understanding of the public's view on this subject. Media surveys never address the issue properly.
2. Treat the cultivation of cannabis for health reasons or for recreational use like home brewing or wine making.
3. Introduce a licensing system to grow cannabis for personal use for a nominal fee, as per registering a dog, a lower fee for medicinal use than for recreational use. But keep the fee modest for those who cannot afford a huge fee, say \$50.00pa.
4. Have easily available testing facilities for people who want to sell a small amount of cannabis or cannabis edibles, drinks etc; at a local growers/farmers market.