



Hon. Wilson Tucker MLC
Member for Mining and Pastoral Region
Daylight Saving Party

07 October 2022

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
18-32 Parliament Place
West Perth WA 6005

Dear Chair,

Re: Petition No. 062 – Legalising cannabis in Western Australia

Thank for your correspondence dated the 19th of August and for your invitation to make a submission for the Committee's preliminary investigation of petition No. 062.

Despite the prohibition on the consumption, possession, and cultivation of cannabis for personal use, it remains the most widely used illicit drug in Australia. Community attitudes towards cannabis are becoming increasingly tolerant with 41% of the total population now supporting the legalisation of cannabis for personal use.¹

Contemporary cost-benefit analysis of cannabis legalisation proposals indicates a net benefit from the adoption of a health-based approach to cannabis, with a regulated market for personal use². Western Australia would benefit from such an approach not only in terms of government revenue from taxation, and savings from the criminal justice system, but from the creation of a new industry for the cultivation of cannabis for personal use. This is to say nothing of the opportunities for tourism and retail sales.

The criminalisation of cannabis leads to a number of unintended consequences, including impacts on the lives of users. A criminal record can present problems with obtaining employment, housing and education opportunities. A tenant of public

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019* (Drug Statistics series no. 32) 53.

² Shanahan M and Ritter A, 'Cost Benefit Analysis of Two Policy Options for Cannabis: Status Quo and Legalisation' (2014) 9(4) *PLOS ONE* 95569.

housing or private rentals may face eviction if drugs are detected on the premises, resulting in potential homelessness.³ Additionally, stigma and the fear of criminal penalties are often cited as a barrier to obtaining treatment for illicit drug use. The adoption of a health-based approach, with a regulated legal market for personal cannabis would remove the risk of criminal penalties for at risk users seeking treatment and go some way towards reducing the stigma attached to cannabis use.⁴

The petitioners have called for the Legislative Council to recommend to the Government that it introduce legislation to allow for the development of a regulated cannabis industry. Western Australia has much to gain from such a proposal and I hope the Committee will give this issue due care and consideration.

Kind regards,



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³ Legislative Council Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community, Parliament of Western Australia, *Help, not handcuffs: Evidence-based approaches to reducing harm from illicit drug use* (Final Report, 28 November 2019) 25 [3.56]-[3.65].

⁴ Ibid 27 [3.66]-[3.69].