

o. of Signatures: 784

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

believe that cannabis is used legally and illegally by approximately 60% (1) of the population in their lifetime. There is a significant overlap between recreational and medicinal use of cannabis in Australia, with a report from the 'harm reduction journal' following a 2019 national household drug survey stating, that 2.5 million people or 11.7% of the population having used cannabis in 2019. 600,000 (23.1%) of whom used cannabis for medicinal purposes, with 6.8% declaring use for medicinal purposes only and 16.3% for both medicinal and recreational purposes. This statistic is consistent, regardless of whether the cannabis consumed was acquired illicitly or through a prescribing GP (2). The report also indicates that, although Australia has a solid framework for legal medicinal cannabis, consumers for both recreational and medicinal cannabis continue to acquire products via illicit means, subsequently propping up a black market that is estimated to be valued nationwide at \$4.5 billion as of 2018 (the most recent figures available for the illicit cannabis market) (3). Although now figures released from the ACIC (Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission) value a combined market of legal and illegal cannabis to a total of \$14.8 billion as of late 2020 (4).

Legalisation would allow for a regulated market that increases safety to consumers, with the current prevalent use of PGRs (plant growth regulators) when chemically derived, which the vast majority are, have found to potentially cause cancer, infertility, can poison the liver and are considered to be environmental pollutants and were actually banned by the EPA (environmental protection agency) in America in the 1980s (6); this danger to public health would be avoided with the advent of a recreational cannabis market requiring COAs (Certificate Of Authentication) on all cannabis products. In turn, it would appear obvious to common sense, that the legalisation and implantation of a regulated market would significantly improve the safeguarding of minors, of which the illicit market does not take into consideration the age and subsequent impact on a young developing mind when selling

them cannabis. While there have been arguments that legalising cannabis may increase use among minors, a study published in 2020 by the Journal of Adolescent Health in the United States found a 16% decrease in use following legalisation of recreational cannabis (7). By decreasing the impact of the black market, we increase the safeguarding of our nation's youth; this appears to be common sense once again.

It would also follow logic that a regulated cannabis market reduces criminality and can provide significant tax income to state and federal governments. Taking New Mexico in the United States as an example, with a similar population as Western Australia of around 2.1 million, which has now legalised recreational cannabis since June 2021, projected a tax revenue for the state to be at \$22.7 million by the end of the first financial year of recreational sales, with a 10.6% increase each year after that (8). Legalisation of recreational cannabis can and will provide an array of different jobs within a new sustainable industry and potentially be as profitable as our mining sector. Benefiting our local economy as well as the export sectors, in addition to expanding the scope of already existing industries that would benefit, which include, natural supplement companies, tourism, and the hospitality industry; with each one of these existing industries able to incorporate recreational cannabis into their current business models.

Regarding incarceration, it is currently our indigenous population in particular that are disproportionately impacted by prohibition, with for example mothers being incarcerated due to not being able to pay fines. This further contributes to inter-generational trauma and perpetuates a cycle of disparity and demonising those who are otherwise law-abiding citizens, but due to financial and other hardships, end up with criminal convictions from cannabis prohibition, holding them back from opportunities that would otherwise be at their disposal if cannabis was not illegal.

Furthermore, another very significant positive benefit for the state would include reduced costs related to policing, court costs, and incarceration costs with which prohibition of cannabis entails; freeing

up resources and time that could be better put to use within our communities to combat serious criminal activities; in particular our organised crime syndicates, which are currently the #1 group profiting from cannabis prohibition.

We therefore request that the Legislative Council recommend to the Government that it introduce legislation to allow for the development of a regulated cannabis industry. As we at the LCWA believe, along with now 40%+ (8) of the population in Australia, that the continued prohibition of cannabis is futile in its efforts to curb use and instead props up a multi-billion-dollar black market; of which could rather be spent on educational campaigns on its consumption and rehabilitation programs, along with the multitude of benefits stated above.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

- (1) although this is an anecdotal statistic due to the current legality of cannabis, this figure could potentially be higher
- (2) harm reduction journal – ‘medical cannabis use in Australia: consumer experiences from online cannabis as medicine survey 2020 (CAMS-20)
- (3) news.com.au – Australia missing out on more than \$5 billion by not legalising cannabis
- (4) cannaus.com.au – Australia’s cannabis market valued at \$14.8 billion
- (5) Durangocannabiscompany.com – understating the dangers of growth regulators
- (6) Forbes.com – new data reveals no link between increase cannabis use in teens and legal (cannabis) markets
- (7) Nmpoliticalreport.com
- (8) National Drug Strategy Household survey 2019