

Kara McKee

From: Michael
Sent: Monday, 19 August 2024 2:56 PM
To: Portfolio Committee 1
Subject: Re: Inquiry into the impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in NSW – Witness confirmation and link to witness briefing video

Just realised I may not have formally replied to this email as you asked Alice, I apologise.

I also would like to give the below statement to the Committee before the meeting tomorrow, is that possible? Can you forward it to them all for me?

Many thanks. Look forward to meeting you tomorrow, if you're there! Michael

Further statement from Michael Balderstone ahead of his talk in Lismore tomorrow.

I'm president of the Legalise Cannabis party and the HEMP Embassy in Nimbin but this is also very personal for me. I've had this unique drug education at Nimbin University you might say for the last forty years. The village has a lot of refugees from the drug war and they've taught me a lot. The war on drugs is shameful and embarrassing for me. Our jails are overflowing with people who need mental health help. And aboriginals. 35% of people in jail are aboriginals, who are 3% of the population. Who is not embarrassed? How many black fellas own their own house? They share what they have, not like us white fellas who compete with each other. They're not profiting when they sell nyanrdi (cannabis) they're getting a smoke, and one for their mates also. We'd sell it to our mates. There's no tomorrow for them.

Try looking through this window. Everyone's doing their best. We're all trying to have a good day, have less pain and worry. That's why everyone's taking drugs isn't it? From coffee in the morning to whiskey at night? Most of the country is taking pills, all to try and make us feel good and stay healthy. How can it be criminal? It's all about money and who gets to profit from our pain relief, the biggest business on the planet. This is why they made nature's best pain killers illegal. It's all to control the pain relief market. It's that simple.

And cannabis which was in nearly all the medicines before pharmaceuticals came along, is so safe you cannot die from it it seems. It has no toxicity. Some people have tried hard! Its pain relief key is its anti inflammatory properties and it's not just physical pain, it has a similar effect on mental pain in millions of people. Remember when soccer crowd riots were happening in Amsterdam the police opened the cannabis cafes to chill the crowds.

Anxiety and depression are the chief ailments of our time and cannabis can be excellent for both of them. Not for everybody, but for many of us. We need to be allowed to grow our own medicine for health and economic reasons and we've been driving responsibly for decades now, the saliva testing regime is disgusting bullying, like the whole drug war is in fact. Bullying and profiting off the most traumatised and vulnerable in our society. I think we should actually encourage people to try cannabis for relaxing rather than alcohol and I know we should be absolutely helping aboriginal people to grow their own nyanrdi as it is a gateway drug alright, a gateway away from other drugs like alcohol and meth.

The current system actually encourages people to use cheap powders and pills, cannabis is bulky and smelly and the easiest bust by far. It's a dried unprocessed herb nothing like all the other illegal drugs. And it's uniquely fat soluble, your body wants to keep it. And that's why blood tests show up cannabis use for months which fooled John Howard into thinking cannabis was causing psychosis.

Systemic bullying of our most traumatised people, that's what the drug war is. And Police are somehow seen as the experts. They call the shots and Big Pharmas greed knows no bounds it appears.

You do realise medical and recreational cannabis is exactly the same product? So after ridiculing us for decades when we said pot is good medicine, we now have doctors prescribing legal pot from Canada, none of it organic, all grown indoors, never felt the sun, all irradiated. But we can't grow our own plants in the veggie patch. Hello? It's a no brainer.

Lastly. No wonder people don't want to join the police anymore, respect has gone for their role in this unwinnable unending war. We all know drug use is a health issue but we keep harassing instead of actually helping people. We must stop criminalising them. And the cops on the street know that. Half of them smoked bongos back in school days anyway. And force by its very nature creates resistance. Bring back respect to the job and cops will join up again. I know many good people in the police who are embarrassed by what they have to do to unwell and unhappy people. Getting arrested is not funny for people who need help.