

END THE WAR ON DRUGS

LEGALISE CANNABIS

The war on drugs is an expensive failure. We need a new, realistic and evidence-based approach to drug policy that reflects the reality of people's lives.

Currently, cannabis is manufactured and distributed by people in breach of the criminal law. Much of this is done by criminal organisations such as organised crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs. This is not a sensible way to regulate or distribute any good, especially one that has been used by such a wide cross-section of Australians.

The Greens believe in policy that disempowers organised crime, removes criminals' revenue streams and prevents people coming into contact with illegal drug dealers wherever possible.

Over a third of Australians have consumed cannabis at least once. Cannabis, like other drugs such as alcohol, should be licenced and regulated instead of dealt with via the criminal justice system.

Regulating and licencing cannabis would reduce harm, bring in revenue and – by stopping people from needlessly coming into contact with the police, courts and prisons – save us millions.

In Australia, cannabis arrests account for the largest proportion of illicit drug arrests. In 2015-16, there were almost 80,000 cannabis arrests.¹ Of these arrests, 90 percent were consumers.

The Greens will legalise, regulate and licence cannabis for adult use in NSW.

This is a significant reform for Australia, but other countries around the world have already moved to legalise cannabis. In the USA, nine states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia) have moved to legalise cannabis. Legal cannabis is available in Spain, Uruguay and Canada.

In Uruguay, early data shows that drug-related crime has dropped 20% since cannabis became legal in July 2017.² Early evidence from the US appears to point to a reduction in alcohol consumption, violent crime and prescription opiate overdoses.³ In Canada, use of cannabis did not increase after legalisation.⁴

CANNABIS AROUND THE WORLD

Many countries around the world have legalised cannabis already. Here is how it works elsewhere:

WASHINGTON⁵

- Over 21s can buy up to an ounce.
- Cannabis can only be sold and purchased at state-licensed retail stores.

URUGUAY⁶

- Adults can buy up to 40 grams every month from approved pharmacies.
- Users must register with authorities and have their purchases tracked.
- Registered users can set up smoking clubs of anywhere from 15 to 45 people to grow marijuana. These cannabis cooperatives can plant up to 99 plants in the same space.

SPAIN⁷

- Shared consumption allowed via cannabis social clubs (not for profit associations, democratically operated by its members).

CANADA⁸

- Adults can buy from government, private or online retailers.
- In some jurisdictions, use is permitted in private residences and in public spaces where tobacco is permitted.
- In some jurisdictions, users can grow plants at home.

THE GREENS' PLAN TO LEGALISE CANNABIS IN NSW

- Cannabis will be sold over the counter to anyone over 18 with a valid photo ID, with a limit on the amount able to be purchased based on weight, volume and concentration.
- Six or fewer plants can be cultivated by an adult at home for personal use.
- All commercial scale producers will be non-profits, including but not limited to worker-owned co-ops and cannabis social clubs.
- Percentage of THC and CBD, and strain, will be indicated on all packaging
- Health and treatment information will be available on all packaging.
- Where it is legal to smoke tobacco, it will be legal to smoke cannabis.
- Like tobacco advertising, cannabis advertising would be prohibited.
- Products in retail shops would not be viewable from the street.

NSW CANNABIS AGENCY

To regulate this newly created market, the NSW Cannabis Agency would be established. It will generate revenue from the sale of licenses for cannabis operators and carry out a program of monitoring and enforcement of premises of production and sale. It will conduct an ongoing review and monitoring of the regulatory scheme to ensure it is functioning optimally.

GETTING IT DONE

Within the first 100 days after the election on March 23, the Greens will introduce a private members bill to legalise cannabis for recreational use, as well as move for a parliamentary inquiry into the establishment of the NSW cannabis agency and legalisation.

REVENUE

Legalising cannabis for adult recreational use across Australia with a 10 per cent licence fee and GST could raise about \$1.44 billion over the coming four years.⁹

A state licencing fee will be imposed on the cannabis industry to properly regulate it, set at 10% of the sales revenues of retailers over the previous 12 months. It is estimated that this fee, together with the GST on sales, will add approximately \$480 million to the state budget over the four year budget cycle.

SAVINGS

Each year, \$78.1 million is spent in NSW on dealing with cannabis via our police, courts and prisons. This negatively impacts the people sent through the criminal justice system for personal drug use and diverts both police and court resources from life and death issues such as the prevention of violence against women and children. This expenditure will be saved under this scheme.

MORE FUNDING FOR SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The money saved on tax revenue and in the law enforcement response would be invested in drug treatment services, mental health services and drug education programs.

Legalising cannabis will mean a total boost in net revenue (income received and expenditure averted) of almost \$200 million each year that can be spent on things like schools, hospitals, parks, pool and libraries.

The Greens will allocate \$75 million to drug and alcohol treatment programs across the state, especially focused on regional and rural areas, which currently have no such services. A further \$25 million will be allocated to prevention and harm reduction programs across the state, focused on high school children and young adults.

These evidence-based programs will focus on harm minimisation as opposed to the 'just say no' approach we know doesn't work.

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1. https://acic.govcms.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1491/f/2017/06/iddr_2015-16_cannabis.pdf?v=1498020153
 2. <https://www.greenentrepreneur.com/article/308557>
 3. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 'Crime and the legalization of recreational, 20 Feb 2018
 4. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/publications/drugs-health-products/canadian-cannabis-survey-2018-summary.html>
 5. <https://lcb.wa.gov/mj-education/know-the-law>
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