

DRUG LAW REFORM

Reducing Harm, Saving Lives

For more than half a century, governments have aggressively pursued a disastrous “war on drugs” policy that criminalises a health problem and has only succeeded in making things worse. These policies are causing harm and are killing young people. It’s time for a complete re-think, but the Liberal and Labor parties don’t have the courage. The Greens are the only party with progressive and realistic policies to treat drug use as a health issue, not a criminal one.



THE GREENS WILL:

- **Legalise and regulate cannabis**
- **Test pills at festivals** and in the community and make the outcomes accessible to other people
- Adequately **fund drug and alcohol treatment**
- Fully **fund opiate substitution treatment**

LEGALISE AND REGULATE CANNABIS

Every year in Australia, both the consumption of cannabis and arrests associated with its use continue to rise. 35% of Australians have used cannabis, and it accounts for the greatest proportion of illicit drug arrests across Australia. Despite choosing to use it, millions of Australians are forced to buy cannabis of unknown quality or strength from criminal drug dealers, or grow cannabis plants at home illegally. Creating a regulated legal market for cannabis – as many states of the US, Uruguay and Canada have done – would bust the business model of criminal drug dealers, ensure greater protections for vulnerable cannabis users, and allow for the revenue and the current vast expenditure on the criminal response to cannabis to be redirected to drug treatment, education, and other harm reduction programs.

In place of prohibition, the Australian Greens would create a tightly regulated adult use market for legal cannabis. At the heart of our plan is reducing harm, recognising that people choose to use cannabis.

Our plan would:

- Allow growth of up to six plants at home for personal use only;
- Establish cannabis retail shops which would:
 - Sell only to people aged over 18 years
 - Sell only plain packaged cannabis
 - Prohibit all advertising;
- Establish an Australian Cannabis Agency which would issue licenses for production and sale, carry out a program of monitoring and enforcement of premises of production and sale, and monitor the scheme to ensure that it continues to work as well as possible;
- The Australian Cannabis Agency would also act as the single wholesaler for cannabis – purchasing cannabis from the producers and selling on plain packaged product to the retail stores to ensure quality and consistency;
- Impose strict penalties for the sale of unlicensed or black market cannabis and for anyone found to be driving under the influence of cannabis;
- Review all of these regulations after 2 years.



TEST PILLS AT FESTIVALS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Every year large numbers of Australians use party drugs. This leads to drug overdoses and, in some cases, can claim lives. Many of these deaths are preventable. Pill testing coupled with clear information and monitoring systems are key steps in preventing this.

The Australian Greens will establish:

- Free and accessible pill testing at music festivals and in the community
- A monitoring and information system to tell people who are yet to take drugs about what may be in a drug that they already have
- A drug testing agency

These services will:

- Be free to access and available at times that drug users need them.
- Offer drug users consultations with trained drug and alcohol workers about the content of the drug that has been tested
- Use modern equipment to test the contents of drugs and tell users what is in them.

Drug users and doctors will be able to find out about drugs that are currently being sold through the results of these tests being disseminated through a new drug monitoring system. This system will publish reports on social media and in emergency departments which describe, in simple and easy to understand language, what is known about pills that are in the community and in the market.

FUND DRUG TREATMENT

Fewer than half of Australians who seek alcohol and other drug treatment are able to access what they need. This is unacceptable considering we know that treatment is effective and can significantly reduce the social costs of harmful alcohol and other drug (AOD) consumption.

While there is no silver bullet to “solving the drug problem”, the Greens believe that there are key evidence-based components of good drug policy, and one of these is adequate investment in AOD treatment.

The Greens will reform drug treatment spending by:

- Doubling Commonwealth AOD treatment funding to \$900 million over three years to improve treatment outcomes;
- Redressing the imbalance between law enforcement and treatment expenditure.
- Improving treatment effectiveness by directing resources towards proven treatments and encouraging timely interventions and improved program retention;
- Providing certainty to treatment providers by committing to this expenditure over the forward estimates;
- Developing national accreditation and training standards for harm reduction services;
- Continuing to call for no more sniffer dog use at festivals.

Despite research showing that money is better spent providing AOD treatment than locking people up, Australia’s law enforcement expenditure remains disproportionately high compared to treatment spending. This \$900 million funding boost will go some way towards redressing the imbalance.

FULLY FUND OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY

Opioid replacement therapy, commonly referred to by the most common type – methadone – is an effective measure for reducing many of the harms associated with illicit, injection opioid use.

Methadone and other opiate substitution therapies reduce all kinds of harm such as overdose, self-harm, accidents like road trauma, homelessness and incarceration. Despite this, it costs up to \$4000 a year for people to access these life saving, and life extending, therapies.

The Australian Greens would fully fund this treatment, taking pressure off people who are already struggling, and ensuring that they access this treatment long term.

EXPAND SAFE INJECTING FACILITIES

When Clinically Supervised Injecting Centres were established in Sydney and Melbourne the sky did not fall in. Instead, lives have been saved, injuries minimised, and vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups of people provided with a path into health care and social services. Clinically Supervised Injecting Facilities (CSIFs) allow for vital education and emergency care, as well as offering pathways into rehabilitation, treatment and other health services for people who inject drugs. Evidence from both Australia and overseas indicates that CSIFs are an effective way of reducing some of the harms associated with injecting drug use. The Australian Greens would work to establish these rooms in major cities in response to community need.

