

CANNABIS — OPIOID-BASED PAIN KILLER ADDICTION

**915. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to the research undertaken as part of a multi-institutional study led by researchers from the University of Pittsburgh and Cornell University and published in the *Health Economics* journal that suggests that states in the United States that have legalised recreational cannabis have seen a significant reduction in pharmacy-based codeine distribution.

- (1) In light of the Penington Institute's *Australia's annual overdose report*, published just last week, that highlighted the large number of preventable opioid deaths each year here in Australia, will the Cook government concede that we have a clear problem that needs to be addressed?
- (2) If no to (1), how many Western Australians have died from a misuse of prescription opioids since May 2021, and will the Cook government acknowledge that the legalisation of and easier, regulated access to cannabis would be a societal good when compared with unhealthy addiction to opioid-based pain killers?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Any death due to a drug overdose is a tragedy. To reduce further deaths, the Cook government invested \$111.9 million in 2022–23 into alcohol and other drug services and programs across the state.
- (2) Detailed data on the number of deaths in Western Australia due to the misuse of opioids is not available.