

Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use

From: Kelan Wood
Sent: Friday, 9 November 2018 1:31 PM
To: Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use
Subject: Submission for the Inquiry

To the committee, I wish to address the terms of reference of your inquiry into illicit drug use and alternate approaches to ending it and its effects on communities. First of all I believe that an attempt to end the use of illicit drugs is a well meaning but ultimately futile measure. This data from 7th December 2017 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics states that the largest increases in Australian prisons were made up mostly (and rightfully) of intentionally violent crimes followed by (not so rightfully) illicit drug offences: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4517.0

Given the constantly rising prison numbers, it seems odd to arrest people for choosing to put something in their body. We wouldn't arrest someone for swallowing bleach, no matter how we may feel about the adverse health impacts. The only way to handle the wide spread usage of illicit drugs is through funding into rehab centres, education on the health risks of all substances (including legal ones) and decriminalisation of all illicit drugs. As extreme as it may sound, Portugal's drug policy for decriminalising all substances has worked. Has it eliminated drug use? No, nothing will. Yet that should not be the goal. The goal should be to reduce the harm that substances bring. As of 2016, 43% of Australians aged 14 or over have used illicit drugs (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/ndshs-2016-key-findings/contents/illicit-use-of-drugs>). In Portugal the percentage of our most commonly used drug cannabis, was only 8%.

www.emcdda.europa.eu/countries/drug-reports/2018/portugal_en

These comparisons will continue to be made until Western Australia applies similar laws for the context of their state. We are losing the war on drugs due to it being an ineffective approach, especially in comparison to Portugal. One other relevant matter that I feel should be brought up is the prohibition on cannabis. This prohibition has been so heavily influenced by propaganda that a legitimate and healthy debate on the issue is often suppressed at all angles. For a non toxic plant that naturally clicks as a medicine with the neurotransmitters of our endo-cannabinoid system, you would think self prescribing this for the homeostasis of a number of issues wouldn't be too hard. And quite often it isn't, yet our drug laws have failed to catch up. As a safer alternative to alcohol and tobacco, it also has become a drug of choice for very good reason and the majority of users are able to understand how to use the drug moderately. I hope this statement is helpful to the committee in its research for the inquiry.