

Hon Robin Scott MLC

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Select Committee into Alternate Approaches To
Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its effect on the Community.

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to make a submission with respect to the above Parliamentary Inquiry into Illicit drug use.

Over many years I have watched the damage to property and to families who have had members of their own families falling into the abyss of drug dependence. Whole Families who have tried their very best to assist and support their offspring, nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters to leave behind their dependency on drugs, only to realise that their endeavours have been in vain.

These families have to come to terms with the fact that the person they love is now reduced to stealing from them to pay for their addiction, as family heir looms and objects that they have saved hard to collect over the years all of a sudden go missing. Their son or daughter is now reduced to a shell of their former self and an intelligent conversation is now impossible because the only thing in their mind is to get the next 'hit' and get the money to pay for that 'hit'.

I have always believed that drug users should be helped by the various agencies or if they are incarcerated, then isolation and help be offered to rehabilitate the inmate. I also felt very strongly about the dealers and suppliers of drugs and was convinced that the appropriate punishment was prison for a very long time. I believed in throwing the key away to discourage any would be dealers entering this miserable industry.

All this changed for me after a chance meeting with a prison warden who I spent a few days with in the Kimberley. We were both on holiday and of course the question came up "WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING". Before long we were talking about the people in Casuarina Prison the top maximum security facility south of Perth. I told him my views on the drug problem and he politely listened to my opinion and I actually believed we were of a like mind on this subject.

After I finished he smiled and said he would now tell me how it really is and the only way forward with this problem was to completely change our thinking on drugs. Myself along with many other people have got it wrong and that is exactly how the major suppliers and dealers want it to be. By providing the status quo nothing will change.

I mentioned the rush of prisoners wanting to enter the drug free wings of the prison and he again laughed and told me there are no drug free areas in prison. The main reason for prisoners volunteering to enter these areas is only to benefit from the increase in privileges.

The suppliers move their drugs around the state with the greatest of ease. The most common method is to approach a young person and offer them twenty thousand dollars to deliver a package to Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Broome or Kununurra. They will even offer to pay for car repairs to make sure the person vehicle is up to the trip. Should the Police stumble on the courier it makes no difference to the supplier. He has many more kilos of drugs and he will approach another young person and just keep going till his delivery has been made.

There are mountains of drugs and truck loads of money. Everything is well in this lucrative industry and the only people being caught are the silly young mules. The dealers know that if they get caught with 30 grams, all they have to say is that they are users and they will get a reduced sentence. This advice is often passed on to them via their lawyer.

When you look at the international courier he is given a large sum of money before he leaves his country. He will buy a house a car and pay for the education of his children before leaving with his cargo of misery. If he is not caught he will return to enjoy the spoils of his dangerous journey and all will be well. If on the other hand he is caught then he will go to jail for a few years but, he already knows that while in prison if he behaves he can be out in three or four years. In this time he would learn how to speak good English and he will even have learned a skill he can use when he returns home. All this while having three good meals a day and living in air-conditioned comfort. The big deal for him now will be going home to a hero's welcome from his family. They only see the fact he provided well for his family and to do so give up his freedom for a few years.

The term 'war on drugs' started in the early seventies nearly 50 years ago and we are losing this war, no we have lost the war. We are filling our prisons with users and mules. A human tragedy, while the main operators go about their lives enjoying the huge wealth they extract from this hideous industry. It is an industry which is very well financed and the most modern business processes are used to operate and control this industry in much the same way as our largest corporate companies.

Our only defence is the Police force who have limited resources and financial restraints which will always hinder any progress they make. We hear of large drug hauls being intercepted by the authorities and some of us think that will make a difference to the drug situation. Please believe me that for every tonne of drugs caught ten tonnes comes in to our country.

If we only look at the crime rate and just how much it has increased over the years. Consider the type of crimes you find and most are drug related; muggings, home invasions, assaults on hospital personnel, ambulance attendants, all come back to the common denominator which is drugs.

Many parents, brothers, sisters and friends have had to watch a person close to them fall into the web of drug use and suffer just as much or more when they realise that nothing can be done unless the user asks for help which doesn't happen often.

I strongly believe that making drugs available to hardened users is the only way to turn this war around and help prevent future generations falling into a life of drugs.

Presently a drug user has to find the money to feed their addiction, this usually means stealing, or in return for drugs, dealing. Prostitution is also a method of procuring drugs.

When they buy the drugs they have no care where the drugs come from or what has been used to cook up the drug. Much of the drug industry use anything from floor cleaner to oil additives and anything else readily available at Bunnings or any hardware store. When they have the drug they go to a place where they will not be disturbed to shoot-up. This can be under a bridge or behind a bush, either way they become vulnerable and a danger to themselves.

If we could provide a safe place where users could collect drugs, administer the drug using clean needles and where help could be offered this would make a dramatic difference to this drug war. The user could be registered and monitored, they would no longer have to commit crime to get their next 'hit'. We would have less people in our jails, the fear of HIV being passed by on sharing needles would be greatly diminished and less fear in the community.

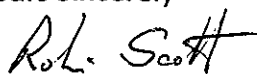
We don't have to make the drugs legal, we only have to make them available to the people who have a dependency, and if they know they can safely procure their drug in a safe environment it would assist in reducing the crime rate. It would reduce the pressure in the Emergency departments in our hospitals, family anguish, and most of all it would allow the authorities to help drug dependent people and maybe discourage the next generation to say no to drugs.

WE have to do something different to win this war, we are wasting our money on buckets and mops instead of fixing the leaky roof.

I wish the committee the very best and I hope that you can come up with a solution to this problem which is destroying many families including my own family. Taking away the huge wealth that the drug trade generates would also stem the backyard producers. This select committee into illicit drug use has the potential to make a very significant contribution to the future of Australia.

You are being watched closely by the people of this state, please do not let us down.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. L. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Robin Scott