



PHANZ Media Release

Cannabis referendum position and policy statement

Starts:

PHANZ Cannabis referendum position and policy statement of support

The Public Health Association of New Zealand supports a 'Yes' vote on the forthcoming cannabis referendum. Cannabis legalisation should be implemented with a long-term robust monitoring and evaluation framework. This position recognises that cannabis-related harms are best addressed through a health-based approach, not through criminalisation, and that the current prohibition approach to cannabis is a source of inequity in New Zealand.

We call for the evidence on cannabis use, harms, and legalisation to be communicated in a way that is non-stigmatised and balanced. We intend to continue to advocate for changes in the bill and provide expert opinion on the bill if it is introduced to parliament to inform legislation. If this bill comes into force, the Public Health Association of New Zealand will advocate for and contribute to evaluation of the health, social, and economic impacts. We will also advocate for amendments to the regulatory framework should monitoring and evaluation suggest that adjustments are needed.

Specifically we maintain:

- The final legislation should embed a strong public health and harm reduction approach
- The restriction on cannabis use for those under the age of 20 be maintained
- One of the three positions described in section 75 (3) on the proposed Cannabis Appeals Authority be allocated to Māori to enact partnership in decision making powers under Te Tiriti O Waitangi
- The final legislation include provision for expungement of previous convictions for recreational quantities of cannabis possession, which will address historical inequity for Māori and prevent intergenerational inequality from developing
- In regard to schedule 2 Persons ineligible to be licensees, that persons that have had previous Cannabis related convictions be eligible for a license following full legalisation of Cannabis and Royal Assent of the Bill (in the absence of full expungement of previous cannabis related convictions in the proposed Bill)

- Coordination should occur between tobacco control efforts and cannabis regulation, to monitor the effects of cannabis legalisation on tobacco smoking, and to provide a consistent public health approach and policy coherence [2]
- The final legislation include stronger provisions to protect against corporate interests weakening controls over time, which should include frequent review timeframes
- Counter-measures to protect against harms arising from drug driving are maintained, incorporating a strong focus on impairment rather than simply a positive detection of low levels of THC related to non-recent use of cannabis

The PHANZ is committed to advocate for a health-based approach to cannabis and other drug use.

[Our full updated Cannabis referendum position and policy statement can be found here](#)

Ends

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