

Council For The National Interest

PO Box 653, Belmont WA 6984
0418 742 701
0430 147 049
admin@cniwa.com.au
www.cniwa.com.au
ABN 43 775 878 315



24 February 2020

Hon Sue Ellery BA MLC
Minister for Education and Training
13th Floor. Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Minister Ellery

I write to draw your attention to the results of a survey of nearly 5000 schoolchildren, claimed to be the biggest of its kind ever undertaken in WA. The survey was carried out by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and thus we accept that it is credible.

Drugs and Alcohol – more than half (58 per cent) of all year 10-12 students have drunk alcohol and 30 per cent have smoked cigarettes.

More than one quarter (28 per cent) of Year 9-12s have tried Marijuana and 13 per cent have experimented with other drugs.

Nearly three quarters of all children surveyed think people their age should not use drugs or alcohol but there is an age divide: one third of Year 10-12s say it is OK to drink and one quarter think it is OK to use Marijuana.

These results raise serious questions about the effectiveness of school Drug and Alcohol Education Programs in the schools:

- (i) Whilst a small number of Year 12s would have reached legal age of 18 for alcohol use "How can it be acceptable for 58 per cent to have drunk alcohol?"
- (ii) More serious, 30 per cent of Year 10-12s have smoked cigarettes. "What has happened to the once strong anti-smoking education program which led to very low cigarette smoking among young people?"
- (iii) Even More serious, "How is possible for such a significant percentage of young schoolchildren to gain access to illegal marijuana and other illicit drugs?"
- (iv) Of grave concern, in relation to alcohol there is no mention of 'responsible use' and further that one quarter of Year 10-12s think it is OK to use Marijuana.

A school drugs education program should inculcate in students that the immediate effects of marijuana/cannabis use include:

Confusion and anxiety Restlessness Detachment from reality Hallucinations
Paranoia Panic Attacks.

Cannabis has more tar and higher levels of cancer causing chemicals than tobacco and thus has serious health effects in the immediate term and in the longer term. Some of these health effects are manifested in subsequent generations. This is a brief outline of the dangers of cannabis. There is much more about which concern can be raised.

CNI offers the view that if there is a strong, informative school drug education program in place along the above lines then it would be highly unlikely 25 per cent of Year 10-12s would think it is OK to use Marijuana/Cannabis.

In the national interest, we should be grateful if you would kindly advise what your Government will do to address the unsatisfactory situation as revealed by this survey.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Hon Roger Cook MLA, Minister for Health and Hon Michelle Roberts MLA Minister for Police as some of the issues fall within their portfolios.

We look forward to your detailed response, please.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denis J. Whitely". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'D' at the beginning.

Denis J Whitely
Executive Director