**Legalisation of Marijuana - Debate**

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, (ACLU) blacks and whites use marijuana at roughly the same rates, yet blacks are nearly four times more likely to be arrested for a pot-related crime. This shows that the fact that marijuana is illegal promotes racism in a sense and so legalising it would reduce racism in some ways.

In 2017, there were 77,549 cannabis arrests. Cannabis continues to account for over half of all drug arrests, the overwhelming majority of those are for simple possession (91%). The community isn’t aware how much it costs to have large amounts of people being dragged through the courts for personal cannabis use. People need to be charged, processed, and entered into an already overcrowded court system. Police time and judge time is expensive.

Cannabis possession justifies a massive drawdown of resources, probably $600 million of the $1.1billion Australian drug war budget. Even conservatives would say that legalising cannabis would allow law enforcement bodies to concentrate on what the community considers to be the really damaging drugs, like ice and heroin. Those extra resources could also be used for any number of better uses such as social workers, nurses and counsellors.

Between 2013 and 2016, community tolerance for cannabis use dramatically increased by 9%. Support for Cannabis legalisation increased from 26% in 2013 to 35% in 2016 and support for legislation permitting the use of cannabis for medical purposes increased to 85% for people over 18 years. Approval of regular adult use of cannabis was higher in 2016 at 14.5% compared to  9.8% in 2013.

It turns out when asked that Australians are most concerned about alcohol (28%) and ice (45%). There is also a new concern in 2016: over the counter opioid painkillers. Abuse of painkillers was ‘off the radar’ for government policy-makers as late as 2007.

Without cannabis Australian drug law enforcement budgets could be cut by 50 percent. That money could be put into hospital beds and treatment centres for seriously affected drugs users.

Some states in the US have legalised possession and sale of small amounts of cannabis for personal use, including Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Washington DC. So far, this move does not seem to have led to an increase in use of cannabis or an increase in harms in those states but further monitoring is needed.

Some of the arguments for legalisation are that it would reduce the black market and criminal networks associated with the drug trade, and shift responses and funding from police and the criminal justice system towards health and treatment programs. Taxes raised could be collected to benefit the community.