

**Effects of the Western Australian  
Cannabis Infringement Notice  
Scheme on attitudes and  
drug use behaviour of  
school children  
Baseline, Year 1**



**Effects of the Western Australian  
cannabis Infringement Notice  
scheme on attitudes and drug use  
behaviour of school children –  
Baseline, Year 1**

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*This is a report of Sub-study 7 of An evaluation of the impact of changes to cannabis law in WA on cannabis use, the drug market, law enforcement, knowledge and attitudes, and cannabis-related harms - Year 1*

Like the 3 other sub-studies in this research, this sub-study comprises the pre-phase of a pre-post study of the impact of the changes to cannabis law in WA. It is envisaged that the post phase will be conducted 18 months after the commencement of the new laws which occurred on March 22 2004.

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## OTHER REPORTS ON THIS RESEARCH

This is a list of the Year 1 Sub-study reports published as part of the *Evaluation of the impact of changes to cannabis law in Western Australia on cannabis use, the drug market, law enforcement, knowledge and attitudes, and cannabis-related harms*.

### Sub-study 1

Fetherston, J. & Lenton, S. (2005) *Effects of the Western Australian Cannabis Infringement Notice Scheme on public attitudes, knowledge and use – Baseline, Year 1*. Perth, National Drug Research Institute.

### Sub-study 2

Chanteloup, F., Lenton, S., Barratt, M. & Fetherston, J. (2005) *Effects of the Western Australian Cannabis Infringement Notice Scheme on regular cannabis users regarding attitudes, use, and drug market factors – Baseline, Year 1*. Perth, National Drug Research Institute.

### Sub-study 5

Sutton, A. (2005) *Review of policy makers, police and judicial perspectives on the Western Australian Cannabis Infringement Notice Scheme– Baseline, Year 1*. Perth, National Drug Research Institute.

### Sub-study 7

Farrington, F. & Lenton, S. (2005) *Effects of the Western Australian Cannabis Infringement Notice Scheme on the attitudes and drug use of school children – Baseline, Year 1*. Perth, National Drug Research Institute.

### Summary report

Lenton, S., Chanteloup, F., Fetherston, J., Sutton, A., Hawks, D., Barratt, M. & Farrington, F. (In press) *An evaluation of the impact of changes to cannabis law in WA - Summary of the Year 1 findings*. Canberra: National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report on one of the Sub-studies of a larger project funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF) to *evaluate the impact of changes to cannabis law in WA on cannabis use, the drug market, law enforcement, knowledge and attitudes, and cannabis-related harms.*

This project is a pre-post evaluation of changes to legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences as a result of recommendations of the WA Community Drug Summit held by the WA Government in August 2001. The *Cannabis Control Act 2003*, which came into effect on 22 March 2004, introduced a system of *prohibition with civil penalties*, the Cannabis Infringement Notice (CIN) Scheme, for adults committing minor cannabis offences.

Although the legislative and other changes relate to cannabis use by adults, young people are one group who may be at a higher risk of developing the adverse acute and chronic effects of cannabis, and in particular may be more at risk of dependence. An important question is the extent to which changes to laws affecting adults may impact on the drug use of school age people.

The aims of this Sub-study of impact of legislative change on attitudes and drug use behaviour of school children were to:

- Determine the extent to which the changes in legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences applying to adults affect school students cannabis use, knowledge and attitudes to cannabis and the law, and their experience of acquiring and supplying cannabis in the drug market.
- Examine perceptions of teachers who provide school drug education regarding the influence of the new legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences on how drug education is conducted in schools and whether students' attitudes to cannabis use change.

There are two components to this sub-study. The first is a two-wave survey of students in years 9 and 12 at a sample of government schools in WA. The first wave was conducted in the months before, and the second will be conducted 18 months after, the introduction of legislative change for cannabis in WA on 22 March 2004.

The second component of this sub-study is a focus group study of school drug education teachers.

This report describes the results of the pre-change data collected in both components. This provides a baseline against which post-change effects will be compared when the second wave of the study is conducted.

### The student survey

The student survey sample comprised 2638 students in years 9 and 12 from a selection of 11, government secondary schools in the Perth metropolitan area.

### *Knowledge*

In general respondents did not possess a high degree of knowledge about cannabis. They were more knowledgeable about cannabis related harms, risks and problems than prevalence of use and current cannabis law.

This suggests that education for school age children needs to focus not only on the harms associated with cannabis, but importantly on challenging incorrect assumptions that overestimate prevalence of school age use and informing them about the laws which apply to it.

Overall, respondents appeared to have a better knowledge of the current penalties applying to use of cannabis by adults than they did to use by juveniles. Education for school age people about the penalties applying to cannabis offences should ensure that it addresses those for school-age people and not simply adults.

While the phrase *prohibition with civil penalties* is well understood by the majority of adults only about a third (32%) of all school student respondents in this study understood the term. This suggests a more thorough explanation of the prohibition with civil penalties approach is required with school age students.

Half (49%) of year 9 students and 40% of those who had never used the drug thought cannabis use by an adult should not be a criminal offence, compared to 66% of year 12 students and 82% of those who had ever used cannabis.

### *Drug use*

Overall, 37% of the sample said that they had ever used cannabis. As expected significantly more (50%) year 12 students had used cannabis than their year 9 counterparts (28%). Lifetime use figures were comparable with other recent data from a benchmark survey of WA school students (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004). The top 5 reasons given for not using the drug by those who had never used were: *I don't need it* (76%), *can have a good time without using it* (67%), *concerned it might effect my health* (64%) and *it's illegal* (60%).

Some 54% of all students said that they had had the opportunity to use cannabis and 25% said that they had the opportunity to use other illegal drugs. While only 16% of those who had not used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had an opportunity to use other illegal drugs, 53% of those who had used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had such an opportunity. This does not suggest that cannabis use has a causal relationship to other drug use, but that recent cannabis users are more likely to be exposed to opportunities to use other illicit drugs. This is consistent with research that suggests early cannabis use is a (non-causal) marker of other drug use and suggests that the mechanism which links the two is more likely to be social and concerned with peer networks and drug use opportunities than it is to be due to the drug itself (Kandel, 2002).

While 39% of year 12 students had used cannabis in the last 12 months, 24% of year 9 students had done so. Furthermore, 21% of the year 12s, compared to 16% of the year 9s, had used the drug in the last 4 weeks. There was little difference between the proportion of year 12 (12%) and year 9 (11%) students who said that they had used cannabis in the last week. On their own right these figures are not remarkable, but their comparison with data from the 18 month evaluation of the new cannabis laws



will be a key indicator of the extent to which the changes have affected cannabis or other drug use among school children.

Drug related risky activities, and drug-related social and health problems were more prevalent where alcohol and cannabis were used in combination in the last 12 months compared to where each had been used alone. However, use of cannabis alone, or in combination with alcohol, was significantly more likely to be associated with school work suffering. This is consistent with longitudinal studies that have shown that early heavy use of cannabis is associated with poor educational achievement and early school leaving (Lynskey & Hall, 2000). The finding supports the decision taken to exclude those under 18 from the CIN scheme, but rather have them continue to be dealt with through the juvenile justice system.

Most commonly mentioned locations of use were *friends house* (69%), *parties* (61%), *public places* (44%), *own home* (32%) *in cars* (21%) and *school* (16%). Most commonly mentioned method of use was *a bong* (51%), followed by *joints* (17%) *a pipe* (14%) and *a bucket bong* (12%).

#### *Drug Market Factors*

The majority of students who had used cannabis said that they now usually obtain cannabis by being *given it by a family member or friend* (38%), followed by *buying it from a dealer or supplier* (15%) and buying it from a friend or family member (13%). Overall 85% of students who had used cannabis said it was *easy* or *very easy* to obtain now.

Of concern is that students reported being offered alcohol (55%) amphetamines (35%) and ecstasy (23%) when they had tried to obtain cannabis. It is possible that within 18 months of the proposed legislative changes there may be shifts in the cannabis market toward a larger proportion of the market being supplied by small-time user-growers, rather than larger scale suppliers with other criminal associations who also supply other drugs. If this happens changes may occur in the availability of other drugs when obtaining cannabis. If these changes are evident among school age consumers of cannabis then one could expect effects on the proportion offered other drugs when obtaining cannabis.

Most (58%) of those who had ever used cannabis said that they had never supplied the drug to others. Some 29% said that they had *given it to friends or family*, 25% had *given it to others* 18% had *sold to others* and 14% had *sold it to friends or family*. There would be understandable community concern if the introduction of the CIN scheme was associated with increased involvement in cannabis dealing by school students. While there is no indication in the literature that this is likely to occur, the post-change data collection should allow any such changes to be detected, should they occur.

*Anticipated impact of legislative change on own cannabis use*

Overall, 55% of students said that they would *not try* cannabis if civil penalties applied 9% said they would *use as often as they do now*, 6% said they *would try it*, and 27% were unsure.

Among those who had never used the drug 70% said they would *not try it* if prohibition with civil penalties were introduced and 5% said they *would try it*. Some 24% of those who had not used the drug said they were unsure how a change to civil penalties would affect their use.

Among students who had not used cannabis significantly more (11%) said that they would try the drug if it were legalised, compared to if prohibition with civil penalties were introduced. Furthermore, among those who had used the drug 14% said they would use it more often than they do now under a system of legalisation whereas only 3% said they would use more under a prohibition with civil penalties scheme.

Two obvious conclusions emerge from the results on likely impact of the legislative changes on respondents cannabis use. Firstly, consistent with the literature which failed to find that ‘decriminalisation’ of cannabis affected rates of use by children, whether cannabis use for adults is illegal and *criminal* or illegal and subject to *civil* penalties has little impact on drug use intentions of the vast majority of the school students in this sample. Secondly, the results suggest that if cannabis use for adults was *legalised* a significantly larger minority of current non-users would use it and current users would use it more often.

Together, these conclusions support introduction of *prohibition with civil penalty* schemes such as the CIN scheme, but not legalisation of cannabis use. It will be interesting to see whether the post-change data support the use intentions of the school students surveyed in this pre-change phase of the study.

### **Teacher focus group component**

Four 90 minute focus groups of six drug education teachers each were held in August 2002. Teachers from twenty schools participated.

The following points were supported by all, or the majority of teachers who participated in the focus groups:

- Drug education had a low priority in the whole school context.
- The current cannabis laws have no impact on the way they conduct cannabis education.
- The new cannabis laws were unlikely to affect the way they conducted cannabis education or to affect school policy because cannabis would still be illegal and the legal changes would not apply to juveniles.
- Many students had inaccurate knowledge about the current cannabis laws and had limited understanding of how the laws related to them.
- As drug educators they spent much of their time when talking about the current cannabis law, dispelling common myths. For example many students believed that the possession of cannabis was legal.

- Students generally don't believe they will be caught for a cannabis offence and are convinced that nothing will happen to them if they are caught.
- Students were confused about the proposed changes to cannabis law and did not realise that any changes to the cannabis law would only apply to adults.
- The media coverage to date had impacted negatively on student knowledge and young people were receiving incorrect messages with no corrective education.
- For students to receive education about the proposed scheme a resource should be produced that could be easily implemented in the classroom.
- The resource should be free of charge, skills based, interactive and able to cater to all students regardless of cultural or learning differences or whether they had used cannabis.
- Quality presenters, such as School Drug Education Project (SDEP) should be engaged to present professional development on new materials regarding cannabis at whole of school professional development day.
- The current cannabis law had no impact on student use as many students were experimenting or purposely indulging in cannabis use as risk taking behaviour and the law had neither an encouraging or deterrent effect.
- The proposed scheme would not have any impact on student use due to the increased social acceptability of the cannabis.
- Few students would seek help from the school for their cannabis use because the support structures available in schools did not encourage young people using cannabis to access them.

There was a concern by some in the community that the CIN scheme would undermine drug education in schools. The views of the drug educators accessed in this focus group study suggest that this is unlikely.



## BACKGROUND

### THE LARGER STUDY

This is a report on the first phase of one of the seven sub-studies of a larger project funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF) to *evaluate the impact of changes to cannabis law in Western Australia on cannabis use, the drug market, law enforcement, knowledge and attitudes, and cannabis-related harms*. NDLERF agreed to initially fund Year 1 of this 2 year study to be conducted over 3 years.

### The cannabis law changes in WA

This larger project is a pre-post evaluation of changes to legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences as a result of recommendations of the WA Community Drug Summit held by the WA Government in August 2001. The WA Government endorsed the Summit's recommendations on 27 November 2001 and, as a result, set up a *Ministerial Working Party on Drug Law Reform* to provide advice on how the recommended cannabis and other drug law reforms could be implemented. The Working Party presented its report (Prior, Swensen, Migro et al., 2002) to the Minister of Health in March 2002. As a consequence the *Cannabis Control Bill 2003* was introduced into the WA Parliament on 20 March 2003 and passed both houses of Parliament on 23 September 2003. The *Cannabis Control Act 2003* came into effect on 22 March 2004. The main features of the changes to cannabis law exemplified in the Bill and the accompanying initiatives are summarised in the box below.

## The Cannabis Infringement Notice (CIN) Scheme

### Principles and Goals:

**The scheme recognises that cannabis, like other drugs has the capacity to cause harm.**

### The scheme should:

- Not encourage use, nor patterns of use which may increase harm;
- Reduce the adverse social costs of being apprehended for a minor cannabis offence;
- Move cannabis supply away from large-scale, criminal, commercial suppliers;
- Free up the police and the courts to deal with more serious crimes.

### Key Features<sup>[1]</sup>:

- The possession of cannabis for personal use remains illegal.
- An adult possessing up to 15 grams of cannabis is eligible for an infringement notice with a penalty of \$100.
- An adult possessing more than 15 but not more than 30 grams of cannabis is eligible for an infringement notice with a penalty of \$150.
- Possession by an adult of a used smoking implement attracts a penalty of \$100.
- Cultivation by an adult of not more than 2 non-hydroponic cannabis plants is eligible for an infringement notice with a penalty of \$200. Adults in households where there are more than 2 plants are not eligible for an infringement notice. Persons cultivating cannabis hydroponically are not eligible for an infringement notice but are subject to criminal prosecution.
- Offenders are required to pay the penalty in full within 28 days or complete a specified cannabis education session.
- Those receiving more than two infringement notices across more than two separate days within a three-year period do not have the option of paying a fine. They must complete the education session or face a criminal charge.
- Juveniles are not eligible for an infringement notice under the CIN scheme but can be cautioned and directed to intervention programs.
- Police will lay criminal charges against persons who attempt to flout the intention of the scheme, for example by engaging in cannabis supply, even if they are only in possession of amounts otherwise eligible for an infringement notice.
- Where those otherwise eligible for an infringement notice face more serious charges for other concurrent offences police will issue criminal charges for the cannabis matters, rather than issue a CIN.
- Thresholds for dealing have been reduced from 100 grams or 25 plants to 100 grams or 10 plants.
- Persons possessing hash, or hash oil are not eligible for an infringement notice.
- Implementation of the scheme has been accompanied by a public education campaign on the harms of cannabis and the laws that apply.
- 'Head shops' (cannabis paraphernalia retailers) and hydroponic equipment suppliers now are subject to regulation.
- The scheme will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

[1] After the data collection for this sub-study was conducted in July 2002 the Government made two changes to the scheme proposed by the Working Party. Given the timing of these changes it was not possible to evaluate public attitudes to these as part of this sub-study. These changes involved: (1) Making possession of a used smoking implement an offence under the CIN scheme attracting a \$100 fine. (2) In response to an Upper House amendment moved by the Opposition, The Government decided to cap the number of notices so that those receiving more than 2 infringement notices across more than 2 separate days within a 3 year period will not have the option of paying a fine. They will have to complete the education session or face a criminal charge.

## Aims and Objectives

The evaluation investigates: police implementation of the changes; drug market effects; impact on regular cannabis users, population prevalence, knowledge and attitudes regarding cannabis and the law; effect on school children; effect on apprehended cannabis users; and population impact on health problems associated with cannabis use.

The specific objectives of the project are to look at the impact of the changes to cannabis legislation and regulation introduced in WA as a consequence of the recommendations of the WA Community Drug Summit on:

- population based prevalence of cannabis use, attitudes, knowledge regarding cannabis and the law, and deterrent effect of cannabis law.
- rates of cannabis and other drug use and attitudes re cannabis and the law among regular cannabis users.
- drug market issues: price, availability, source (user-growers v large scale criminal suppliers etc.), cannabis supplying, income from supplying cannabis, perceived risk of apprehension for supplying.
- attitudes, and practices of members of the law enforcement and magistracy regarding expectations of the legislative changes and their effects on the drug market.
- school students: knowledge of law, attitudes to cannabis, cannabis use and experience of the drug market.
- perceptions of school teachers regarding the influence on students and drug education in schools and judicial sectors involved in enforcing the new legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences.
- perceptions of law enforcement personnel on the influence of the new legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences on the drug market and it's dynamics.
- police attitudes (re cannabis, law, goals of the scheme etc.) and practices (discretion, net-widening etc.)
- individuals apprehended under the existing cannabis cautioning scheme and the new scheme in terms of cannabis use, attitudes to the law and social impacts
- trends in law enforcement activity in relation to minor cannabis offences including the number of apprehensions (arrests, cautions and infringement notices issued), and comparison with cautioning and arrest data prior to the legislative change in order to determine the extent of net-widening, and the burden or savings on the criminal justice system.
- numbers of people seeking treatment for cannabis-related problems
- serious road and other injuries, and psychosis and violence and related hospital admissions among the population in general, and young males in particular.

## Study design

The study consists of seven sub-studies, four of which entail data collection before, and 18 months after, the proposed changes are implemented. This time frame should allow for lags in implementing components of the proposed changes and the bedding down of these. The sub-studies with no year one component will largely be retrospective studies of existing data or retrospective reports from subjects. A summary of the sub-studies follows.

### Sub-studies with a year one component

- *Effects of changes to cannabis law in Western Australia on public attitudes, knowledge and use* – A primarily quantitative study involving a pre-post telephone survey (n = approx. 800 per wave) and additional analysis of existing pop survey data during the post change phase.
- *Effects of changes to cannabis law in Western Australia on regular cannabis users regarding attitudes, use, and drug market factors* – Comprising an in-depth qualitative and quantitative interview with (n = approx. 100 per wave) investigating both impacts on patterns of use and drug market factors (especially original source of cannabis)
- *Effects of changes to cannabis law in Western Australia on the attitudes and drug use of school children* – A Qualitative and quantitative survey of Year 9 and Year 12 students (n = approx 2600 per wave)
- *A study of police, policy makers and judicial attitudes (re cannabis, law, goals of the scheme etc.) and practices (discretion, net widening etc.)*. Involving primarily qualitative interviews (n= approx 30) and possibly some focus groups (n=3).

### Sub-studies with no year one component

- *A study of individuals apprehended under the new scheme in terms of cannabis use, attitudes to the law and police, and social impacts* – This is a descriptive interview study with approx. 80 ex-piators and 80 non-ex-piators.
- *An analysis of law enforcement data for individuals apprehended under new scheme and comparison of that with those apprehended under the existing cannabis cautioning scheme* - Involving retrospective analysis of existing data.
- *A study of existing treatment seeking and cannabis related morbidity and mortality indicator data* – Involving retrospective analysis of using time series data on treatment utilization and health indicators.

## WHY STUDY IMPACTS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Although the proposed legislative changes relate to cannabis use by adults, young people are one group who may be at a higher risk of developing the adverse acute and chronic effects of cannabis, and in particular may be more at risk of dependence. An



important question is the extent to which changes to laws affecting adults may impact on the drug use of children of school age. There was also a concern expressed by some public commentators on the Western Australian CIN scheme that if the community's response to cannabis was seen as 'softer' then this could undermine the conduct of school drug education around cannabis.

Policy impact studies from Australia and the USA suggest that the introduction of similar civil penalty schemes for minor cannabis offences by adults has no discernable impact on cannabis use by children. In the USA, Saveland & Bray (1980, cited in Single, Christie & Ali, 2000; Single, 1989) conducted secondary analyses of four national drug use surveys between 1972 and 1977. They found that cannabis use was higher in the 'decriminalised' states, both before and after the changes in law. Those that did moderate their law had increasing rates of use among adolescents and adults, but this was greater in the other 'non-decriminalisation' states, and the greatest proportional increase in use was in the states with the most severe penalties .

Johnson and colleagues (Johnson, 1980, Johnson, O'Malley & Bachman, 1981, each cited in Single, Christie & Ali, 2000) used data from the Monitoring the Future national surveys of high school students concluded that decriminalisation had virtually no effect on either the rates of cannabis use, or related attitudes and beliefs about cannabis use, among this age group (Single, Christie & Ali, 2000; Single, 1989; Theis & Register, 1993).

In a more recent study of the effects of the legal status imposed by individual states for possession of a small amount of cannabis, Theis and Register (1993) conducted a logistic regression analysis of a sample of 3,913 males in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth who were between the ages of 14 and 21 in 1979 and were reinterviewed in 1984 and 1988. Controlling for a range of factors including age, education, marital status, ethnicity, urbanisation, parents' education, and religious participation, income and wealth, and 'wellbeing' they found 'no strong evidence' that cannabis 'decriminalisation' affected the choice, frequency, or use of alcohol, cannabis or cocaine.

In South Australia, data was examined from three thousand South Australian students aged 11 to 16 years surveyed in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989. Cannabis consumption levels in this age group remained stable between 1986 and 1989, with 20% endorsing that they had ever tried cannabis and 6% having used within the last week . On the basis of this analysis it did not appear that changes to the cannabis laws impacted on cannabis use by secondary school students (Donnelly, Hall & Christie, 2000).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Prevalence of cannabis use

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in Australia as it is in most other industrialised nations (Hall, Johnston, & Donnelly, 1999; Miller & Draper, 2001; United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 1997). Since 1985 self report data concerning drug and alcohol use has been collected nationally in Australia in household surveys conducted as part of the National Drug Strategy (formerly the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse). Surveys were conducted in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1998. In the most recent of these surveys, 39% of all respondents aged 14 or over reported ever having used cannabis (lifetime use), with about 18% having used the drug in the past year (Adhikari & Summerill, 2000;

Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1996). Forty-six percent of Australians who had ever used cannabis continued to do so, having used in the past 12 months (Maxwell, 2001). In 1998, 17% of those Australians who used cannabis in the past 12 months used the drug every day, 25% smoked it at least once a week, but not daily, 16% smoked it once a month, 12% every few months, 16% once or twice a year, and 9% less often (Adhikari & Summerill, 2000).

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey indicated that use of cannabis in the last year by 14-19 year olds increased from 29% to 35% between 1995 and 1998 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1999). Young women evidenced a particularly marked increase in use over this period. The most recent survey of drug use by Western Australian students confirmed that cannabis is the illicit drug, most commonly used by secondary students, with 31% of this group reporting use at some time in their life (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004). Some 28% of 14 year olds (year 9) had ever used cannabis, while 17% had used it in the last month and 10% used the drug in the last week. By age 17 (year 12) 53% had ever used the drug, 25% had used it in the last month and 16% had used in the last week (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004).

### **The Public Health Effects of Cannabis**

Like any legal or illegal drug, cannabis has the capacity to cause harm. The public health significance of cannabis use is affected by the severity of the health effects experienced by individual users as well as the prevalence of cannabis use in the population. While most cannabis use is experimental and intermittent, the major health risks are more likely to be experienced among those using the drug regularly (daily or near daily) over several years or more (Martin & Hall, 1997,1998). The current public health burden of cannabis at current population use rates, is probably low, and far less than that associated with alcohol and tobacco (Hall, 1995; Hall & Babor, 2000). However, as the prevalence of heavy cannabis use increases and the age of initiation declines, the public health burden is likely to increase (Hall, 1995) and, as such, it has been argued that more attention should be paid to the public health impact of the drug, especially on Western societies where use among young people is gradually increasing (Hall & Babor, 2000). The major public health burden associated with cannabis is likely to be associated morbidity rather than mortality (Hall, 1995).

### **The Health Effects of Cannabis on Users**

Although the public health burden of cannabis use is currently small, people who use cannabis, particularly long-term heavy users, can experience significant adverse health effects. The most probable health effects have been identified in recent authoritative systematic reviews of the literature (eg. Hall & Solowij, 1998; Hall, Solowij, & Lemon, 1994; Kalant, Corrigall, Hall, & Smart, 1999; Martin & Hall, 1997,1998).

### **Adolescents – A high risk group for cannabis-related harm**

Particular groups appear to be at elevated risk of developing the adverse acute and chronic effects of cannabis. These include pregnant women, individuals with a history of cardiovascular or psychiatric problems, and adolescents.

Young people are one group who may be at a higher risk of developing the adverse acute and chronic effects of cannabis, and in particular may be more at risk of dependence (Chen, Kandel, & Davies, 1997). Although the majority of adolescent cannabis use is experimental, early onset has been related to poor mental health, significantly higher rates of subsequent substance use, juvenile offending, and unemployment (Fergusson & Horwood, 1997). Fergusson and Horwood (2000) found that, even after adjusting for other factors, those who used cannabis at least 50 times over the past year were 59 times more likely than those who had never used the drug, to have used at least one other illicit drug on at least one occasion. Although, even among weekly users of cannabis, only 26% developed problematic use of these other drugs (Fergusson & Horwood, 2001). Younger (aged 14 to 15) regular users may be more susceptible to effects on criminal involvement, other illicit drug use and suicidal behaviour than older (aged 20 to 21) regular users (Fergusson, Horwood, & Swain-Campbell, 2002).

A recent longitudinal study failed to find any evidence that cannabis use in adolescence was associated with an increased risk of later mental health problems, but adolescent use of tobacco and alcohol independently increased the risk of a later mental health disorder (McGee, Williams, Poulton, & Moffitt, 2000). In a 5 year follow-up study of African American and Hispanic adolescents early cannabis use was associated with early school leaving, delinquency, risky sexual behaviour, later problems with cigarettes, alcohol and cannabis. These findings occurred despite controlling for age, sex, ethnicity and where available early psychological measures (Brook, Bakala, & Whiteman, 1999).

Another recent longitudinal study concluded that, by itself, early onset of cannabis use did not lead to problematic use or progression into other drug use, but the extent of use (especially daily use) was a significant factor (Kandel & Chen, 2000). A number of prospective longitudinal studies have found that early cannabis use has been associated with poor educational achievement, and in particular early school leaving (Lynskey & Hall, 2000). Reviews suggest that these associations may be due to common or overlapping risk factors and life pathways between young people, who may be predisposed to cannabis use and those at increased risk of these other outcomes, rather than to causal connections between cannabis use and these other problems (e.g. Fergusson & Horwood, 1997; Hall, Johnston & Donnelly, 1999). However, more recent studies (e.g. Fergusson & Horwood, 2000) suggest that some of these apparent cannabis effects exist despite controlling for possible confounding factors.

### **Differential health consequences of cannabis use through the life-span**

In a recent editorial in which they reflect on the somewhat contradictory evidence for the health effects of cannabis, Solowij & Greyner (2002) have suggested that the evidence points to cannabis use having different effects and posing different risks through the lifespan. Thus cannabis use poses immediate health risks on the young who are most susceptible to adverse mental health effects, dependence and impacts on psycho-social development, as has been suggested by Fergusson and others (e.g. Chen, Kandel & Davies, 1997; Fergusson & Horwood, 1997, 2000; Fergusson, Horwood & Swain-Campbell, 2002). However, beyond the critical period of adolescence, moderate recreational use of cannabis during the 20's may constitute a

lesser risk to health. During this period the risks associated with acute intoxication and driving, and the dangers of dependence posed by escalating frequency of use, which may result in treatment seeking by the 30's, need to be emphasised in public health measures (Solowij & Greyner, 2002).

### **SUB-STUDY AIMS**

The aims of this sub-study are to:

- Determine the extent to which the changes in legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences applying to adults affect school students cannabis use, knowledge and attitudes to cannabis and the law, and their experience of acquiring and supplying cannabis in the drug market.
- Examine perceptions of teachers who provide school drug education regarding the influence of the new legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences on how drug education is conducted in schools and whether students' attitudes to cannabis use change.

There are two components to this sub-study. The first is a two-wave survey of students in years 9 and 12 at a sample of government schools in WA. The first wave was conducted in the months before, and the second will be conducted 18 months after, the introduction of legislative change for cannabis in WA.

The second component of this sub-study is a focus group study of school drug education teachers.

This report describes both components.

## **COMPONENT 1: SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN YEARS 9 AND 12 AT A SAMPLE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN WA**

### **METHOD**

#### **SAMPLING**

The study sample of 2638 cases was selected controlling for the design effects of clustering (design effect = 1.48; minimum sample required = 2405; statistical power 90%) (Bauman and Phongsavan, 1999), stratified by socio-economic area. The selection of schools for involvement in this study was restricted to the Perth (capital city) metropolitan, government secondary schools. Random selection of schools from which year 9 and year 12 students were drawn, was conducted using an index provided to the researcher by the Education Department of Western, which scores schools on a range of socio-demographic factors. Originally 15 schools were selected for involvement in the survey however recruitment was hampered by two other large school-based studies involving the surveying of students. After considerable negotiation, 11 schools were recruited for involvement in the study.

#### **SCHOOL RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE**

According to Education Department policy, school principals make decision regarding requests to conduct research in their schools. Therefore once selected, school principals were sent a letter (Appendix 1) outlining the purpose of the research, the requirements of the school, the method of gaining parental permission and requesting permission to conduct the questionnaire with all the year 9 students (13-14 year olds) and year 12 students (16-17 year olds) in their school. Schools were offered one hundred dollars to offset any costs, conducting the survey might incur. A follow up phone call was conducted approximately one week after the letters were sent to discuss any concerns, determine if permission was granted, and to access the key person in the school who the researcher could liaise with to organise suitable times to survey the students.

#### **THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was developed to measure students' cannabis related knowledge (including knowledge of the laws and the consequences of being apprehended, cannabis related harms and risks and age specific cannabis use); attitudes to cannabis use (including perceived effects of cannabis use, potential harms that can result as a consequence of cannabis use and perception of the degree to which young people view cannabis use as 'normal'); attitudes to cannabis law (including preferred legal status, likelihood of apprehension and impact on non-use, intention to use and use); patterns of cannabis use (including frequency of use, context of use and intention to use); and drug market factors (including perception of availability, perception of cost and perception of potency.) Prior to the survey, the questionnaire was piloted with students and underwent expert review to assess face and content validity.

## PILOT TESTING

The questionnaire was piloted in two classes of year 9 students from two schools (n=55). The classes were given verbal instructions about the purpose of the questionnaire and how to complete it. In addition they were informed to raise their hand if they did not understand any questions or instructions while completing the questionnaire. No students raised their hands while completing the questionnaire although it was noted that several students asked others sitting near them for clarification about some questions. Both classes were timed while completing the questionnaire with completion times ranging from 30 to 50 minutes. When students finished the questionnaire they were provided with a questionnaire evaluation form (Appendix 3), which required written feedback on the questionnaire. All students completed the pilot questionnaire and the evaluation form.

Although seventeen students indicated the survey was too long, most did not indicate why it was too long or which questions should be omitted. Three students indicated it was repetitive and two reported there was too much reading involved. The majority of students indicated that the instructions were easy to follow with only three students reporting they were difficult to follow. Regarding the format of the questionnaire, the majority of students indicated it was 'okay', with three students reporting it was confusing and two students indicating it was too crowded. Only one student reported that the questions were difficult to understand. The majority of students did not have any concerns about answering any of the questions, however four students indicated that some of the questions were "too personal". The students were asked to indicate if any other choices should be included in the questionnaire especially regarding activities undertaken when affected by cannabis or alcohol and problems experienced due to alcohol or cannabis use. Several responses were offered and these have been included in the questionnaire. The researcher also asked for verbal comments about the questionnaire. The few that were made were similar to the written comment regarding the length of the questionnaire. As a result the questionnaire was shortened slightly and some questions reworded. However to maintain the integrity of the research few questions could be omitted. The resulting questionnaire was designed to be scored by an optical mark recognition scanner.

## SURVEY PROCEDURE

The survey was conducted during May, June and July 2002. The anonymous, self-completion questionnaires were completed by students under the guidance of trained researchers who instructed students and responded to questions following a set procedure. The primary researcher administered the majority of questionnaires, however four other researchers administered questionnaires at various times during the survey period. All researchers used a set protocol to administer the questionnaires. Students took between 30 to 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire. In line with Education Department policy, classroom teachers were in attendance, however they did not respond to questions or actively move around the classroom and were therefore unlikely to have influenced student responses. Prior to the students completing the questionnaires, schools were sent sufficient passive parental consent forms (Appendix 4) to be distributed to every year 9 and year 12 student in the school. These forms emphasised the voluntary, anonymous nature of the survey; outlined the purpose of the research and the nature of the questions; and provided a name and number that parents could contact if they had any concerns about the questionnaire or

the research. Two parents contacted the researcher with questions about the research. The forms were only to be returned to a designated teacher if the student was not to participate in the survey. Five forms were returned from the total sample and these students conducted private study in the classroom while the other students completed the questionnaire.

## EXCLUSION

Prior to data entry, surveys were assessed for inclusion into the study. Exclusion occurred when distinct patterns of answers were recorded (eg. if the response 'true' was selected for all questions in the *knowledge about cannabis* section, or if the response 'strongly agree' was selected for all statements in the *attitudes towards cannabis use* section of the questionnaire); when answers from one section conflicted with answers from another section (eg. if a respondent indicated they had never tried cannabis in one question then indicated they had tried it in another question); and when unsolicited comments were linked to conflicting responses (eg. if a respondent had written derogatory remarks in relation to questions or where extreme answers were given). One hundred and seven questionnaires (3.8%) were excluded prior to data entry, leaving 2638 (Year 9: n=1636; Year 12: n=997) questionnaires eligible for analysis. Of the rejects, 68 were from year 9 students, 36 from year 12 students and 3 could not be classified according to year. Thus exclusions comprised 4.0% of all questionnaires received from year 9 students and 5.5% of those received from year 12 students.

## ANALYSIS

All questionnaires were scored by an optical mark recognition scanner. Quantitative analysis was undertaken using SPSS 6.1 for windows (SPSS Inc., 2000). Although selection occurred as a cluster sample by school, analysis was performed at the student level thereby providing more statistical power. Analysis by student primarily involved frequencies for the entire sample and by year. Non-parametric statistical procedures (Chi-Square Tests) were adopted to determine any statistical differences between year, gender and whether students had ever tried or never tried cannabis.

## ETHICAL ISSUES

The study was approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HR 39/2002) and endorsed by the Western Australian Department of Education. In line with Education Department policy, which indicates that individual school principals make decisions relating to individual school involvement in research studies, permission was sought from individual principals regarding student involvement. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, principals agreed that passive parental consent was appropriate. This was sought prior to the questionnaires being administered.

## RESULTS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

This section of the questionnaire reports the year, age, sex and postcodes of the respondents. A total of 2,638 eligible questionnaires were received.

#### School Year

There were 1,636 (62.1%) eligible questionnaires received from Year 9 students and 997 (37.9%) received from Year 12 students. There were 5 questionnaires where the year field was missing.

#### Gender

The sample was 51.1% female (n=1328) and 48.9% male (n=1272). There were 38 questionnaires where the gender field was missing.

#### Age

The age distribution for the sample is presented in Table 1. The distribution reflects the sampling by years 9 and 12 resulting in only a small number of respondents in the age 15 and age 18 groups.

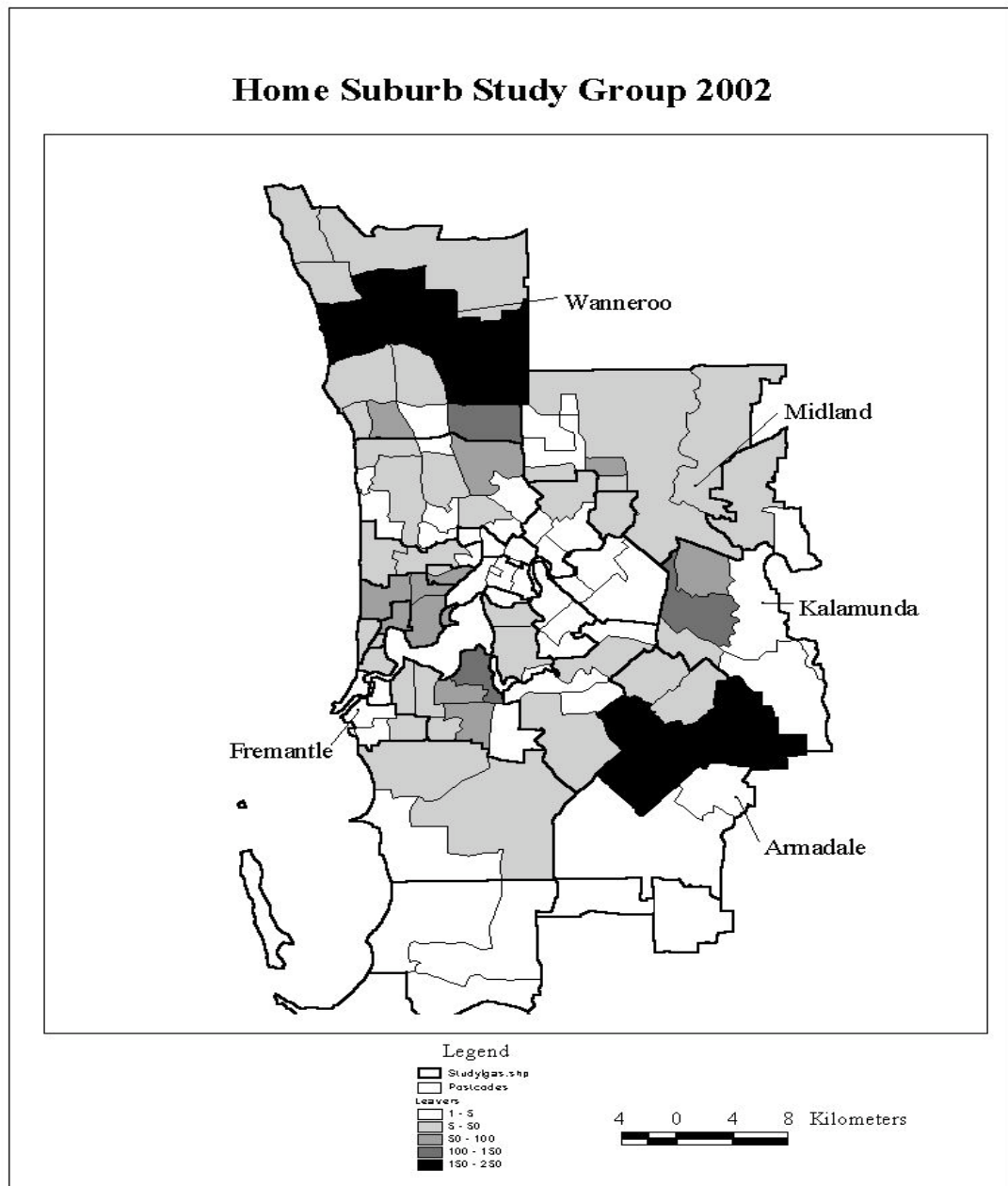
**Table 1: Age distribution**

Age in years	Frequency	Percent	Adjusted percent
13	667	25.3	25.4
14	928	35.2	35.3
15	37	1.4	1.4
16	404	15.3	15.4
17	562	21.3	21.4
18	29	1.1	1.1
Total	2638	100.0	100.0
<i>Missing = 11</i>			



**Postcodes**

Figure 1 shows that the locations of respondents' homes were fairly well spread across the Perth Metropolitan area



**Figure 1: Geographical distribution of respondent's homes**

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CANNABIS

The knowledge section of the questionnaire comprised the following :

- Fourteen statements pertaining to knowledge about the prevalence of cannabis use, potential harms and problems that can result from cannabis use and current cannabis law requiring a true, false or unsure response;
- Five multiple response questions pertaining to current cannabis law; and
- One statement pertaining the meaning of prohibition with civil penalties.

### True, False or Unsure Statements

Tables 2 to 4 report the statements and frequencies for the total sample, year nines and year twelves. The correct response for each question has been bolded.

An overall knowledge score was computed reflecting the average number of correct responses (15) for the total sample (7.07), year nines (7.08) and year twelves (7.07). This indicates that on average, the students answered less than 50% of the knowledge questions correctly and in general respondents did not possess a high degree of knowledge about cannabis. There was no significant difference between scores for year 9 and year 12 students ( $t=-.003$ ,  $df= 2383$ ,  $p=.998$ ). They did however to appear more knowledgeable about cannabis related harms, risks and problems than prevalence of use and current cannabis law.

### Prevalence of cannabis use

Approximately one third (30.6%, 31.5%) of all respondents gave correct responses for the questions related to prevalence of cannabis use. A higher proportion of year 12 students (41.6%) compared to year 9 students (25.7%) correctly responded to the statement: *Over 70% of Year 12 students use cannabis at least once a month* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 71.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Those who had ever used cannabis were significantly more likely to incorrectly agree or be unsure with regards to the statement that *Most 13 year old students in WA have tried cannabis* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 65.70$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Knowledge of prevalence of use and harms by school year, ever and never tried and whole sample – Percent of respondents**

Statement	Year 9 (n= 1636)			Year 12 (n=997)			Sig.
	True	False	Unsure	True	False	Unsure	
<b>Prevalence of use</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Most 13 year old students in WA have tried cannabis.	42.2	<b>31.2</b>	26.6	37.8	<b>30.0</b>	32.2	N.S.
Over 70% of Year 12 students use cannabis at least once a month	27.9	<b>25.7</b>	46.4	28.5	<b>41.6</b>	29.9	.000
<b>Cannabis harms and problems</b>							
Cannabis use increases the risk of developing a mental illness in some people.	<b>72.6</b>	6.1	21.3	<b>70.3</b>	8.0	21.7	N.S.
Weekly use of cannabis can reduce a student's ability to study.	<b>77.9</b>	7.8	14.3	<b>81.0</b>	7.8	11.2	N.S.
Cannabis use can adversely affect a person's ability to drive a car.	<b>63.7</b>	12.5	23.8	<b>79.5</b>	8.4	12.1	.000
Young people who use cannabis weekly are no more likely to try other illegal drugs than those who have never used cannabis (False)	40.9	<b>37.8</b>	20.3	41.7	<b>39.7</b>	18.6	N.S.
Smoking cannabis can increase the chance of developing a respiratory problem (eg. asthma, cancer).	<b>74.2</b>	7.8	18.0	<b>78.9</b>	5.0	16.1	.007
People who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug.	<b>84.0</b>	7.7	8.3	<b>77.4</b>	13.1	9.5	.000

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Sig test was conducted on dichotomised correct and incorrect responses. In each case 'unsure' responses were coded as 'incorrect'*

**Table 2 cont: Knowledge of prevalence of use and harms by school year, ever and never tried and whole sample – Percent of respondents**

Question	Never Tried (n= 1642)			Ever Tried (n=947)			Sig.	Total (n=2638)		
	True	False	Unsure	True	False	Unsure		True	False	Unsure
<b>Prevalence of use</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%		%	%	%
Most 13 year old students in WA have tried cannabis.	29.3	<b>36.5</b>	34.2	59.0	<b>21.1</b>	19.9	.000	40.3	<b>30.6</b>	28.7
Over 70% of Year 12 students use cannabis at least once a month	20.0	<b>33.1</b>	46.9	41.5	<b>29.9</b>	28.5	.000	27.9	<b>31.5</b>	39.8
<b>Cannabis harms and problems</b>										
Cannabis use increases the risk of developing a mental illness in some people.	<b>74.2</b>	4.5	21.3	<b>68.1</b>	10.9	21.0	.001	<b>71.3</b>	6.8	21.2
Weekly use of cannabis can reduce a student's ability to study.	<b>80.3</b>	4.8	14.8	<b>77.0</b>	12.9	10.1	N.S.	<b>78.5</b>	7.8	13
Cannabis use can adversely affect a person's ability to drive a car.	<b>69.4</b>	8.3	22.3	<b>70.3</b>	15.3	14.4	N.S.	<b>69.0</b>	10.8	19.2
Young people who use cannabis weekly are no more likely to try other illegal drugs than those who have never used cannabis (False)	40.3	<b>36.5</b>	23.2	43.1	<b>41.2</b>	15.6	.020	40.9	<b>37.8</b>	20.3
Smoking cannabis can increase the chance of developing a respiratory problem (eg. asthma, cancer).	76.1	<b>5.1</b>	18.8	76.1	<b>9.6</b>	14.3	N.S.	<b>75.2</b>	6.7	17.1
People who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug.	<b>84.2</b>	6.1	9.7	<b>77.0</b>	15.8	7.2	.000	<b>80.7</b>	9.7	8.6

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Sig test was conducted on dichotomised correct and incorrect responses. In each case 'unsure' responses were coded as 'incorrect'*

## Cannabis health harms, risks and problems

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (at least 69%) correctly responded to five of the six statements pertaining to cannabis related potential harms, risks and problems. A higher proportion of year 12 students (79.5%) compared to year 9 students (63.7%) correctly responded to the statement, *Cannabis use can adversely affect a person's ability to drive a car* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 71.47$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). More year 12 students (78.9%) compared to year 9 students (74.2%) correctly responded to the statement: *Smoking cannabis can increase the chance of developing a respiratory problem (eg. asthma, cancer)* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 7.17$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.007$ ). More year 9 students (84%) compared to year 12 students (77.4%) responded correctly to the statement, *People who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 17.11$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

A smaller majority of those who had ever used cannabis (68.1%), compared to those who had never used the drug (74.2%), correctly identified that it was true to say that *Cannabis use increases the risk of developing a mental illness in some people* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 10.66$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Those who had ever used the drug were more likely (41.2%) than those who had never used (36.5%) to identify correctly that it was incorrect to say that *young people who use cannabis weekly are no more likely to try other illegal drugs than those who have never used cannabis* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 5.416$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.020$ ). Those who had ever used were less likely (77.0%) than those who had never used cannabis (84.2%) to agree that *people who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 20.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

## Cannabis and the law

Table 3 shows that of the six statements pertaining to current cannabis law the majority of students (at least 64%) responded correctly to two statements while regarding the other four statements the majority either responded incorrectly or were unsure. A higher proportion of year 9 students (67.8%) compared to year 12 students (60.4%) responded correctly to the statement: *Currently in WA it is illegal to grow a cannabis plant drug* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 14.31$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). More year 9 students (71.3%) compared to year 12 students (64.5%) responded correctly to the statement: *Currently in WA, being convicted of a cannabis offence can affect a person's ability to find employment* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 13.79$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Although the majority of students (58%) responded incorrectly to the statement, *Currently in WA, a person on premises where they know cannabis is being smoked is committing an offence even if they do not smoke it themselves*, more year 9 students responded correctly (45.1%) than year 12 students (35.4%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 23.31$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Few students (15.4%) responded correctly to the statement: *Currently in WA, the penalty for the possession of a bong/pipe for smoking cannabis is less than the penalty for possession of a small quantity of cannabis*, however, a higher proportion of year 9 students (17.1%) compared to year 12 students (13.3%) responded correctly ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 6.47$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p<.011$ ).

Those who had never used the drug were more likely (68.5%) than those who had used it (59.3%) to correctly agree that *Currently in WA it is illegal to grow a cannabis plant* ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 21.66$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p =.000$ ). ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 119.71$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p =.000$ ).

Similarly a larger minority of those who had not used cannabis (34.4%) were more likely than those who had used (25.3%) to correctly disagree with the statement that *Currently in WA, an adult would not usually get a criminal record for possession of a small amount of cannabis.*

**Table 3: Knowledge of cannabis and the law by school year, ever and never tried and whole sample – Percent of respondents**

Item	Year 9 (n= 1636)			Year 12 (n=997)			Sig
	True	False	Unsure	True	False	Unsure	X <sup>2</sup>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Currently in WA, it is legal for an adult to have a small amount of cannabis for personal use	38.8	<b>36.1</b>	25.1	38.3	<b>36.2</b>	25.5	N.S.
Currently in WA it is illegal to grow a cannabis plant.	<b>67.8</b>	19.9	12.3	<b>60.4</b>	23.4	16.2	.000
Currently in WA, an adult would not usually get a criminal record for possession of a small amount of cannabis.	35.3	<b>33.2</b>	31.5	42.6	<b>27.5</b>	29.9	N.S.
Currently in WA, being convicted of a cannabis offence can affect a person's ability to find employment.	<b>71.3</b>	8.7	21.3	<b>64.5</b>	11.2	24.3	.000
Currently in WA, a person on premises where they know cannabis is being smoked is committing an offence even if they do not smoke it themselves.	<b>45.1</b>	19.8	35.1	<b>35.4</b>	29.8	34.8	.000
Currently in WA, the penalty for the possession of a bong/pipe for smoking cannabis is less than the penalty for possession of a small quantity of cannabis.	38.0	<b>17.1</b>	44.9	39.8	<b>13.3</b>	47.0	.011

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Sig test was conducted on dichotomised correct and incorrect responses. In each case 'unsure' responses were coded as 'incorrect'*

**Table 3 cont: Knowledge of cannabis and the law by school year, ever and never tried and whole sample – Percent of respondents**

Statement	Never Tried (n= 1642)			Ever Tried (n=947)			Sig.	Total (n=2638)		
	True	False	Unsure	True	False	Unsure		True	False	Unsure
	%	%	%	%	%	%		%	%	%
Currently in WA, it is legal for an adult to have a small amount of cannabis for personal use	34.1	<b>6.0</b>	29.9	46.6	<b>36.2</b>	17.2	N.S.	37.9	<b>35.5</b>	24.8
Currently in WA it is illegal to grow a cannabis plant.	<b>68.5</b>	16.3	15.2	<b>59.3</b>	29.3	11.4	.000	<b>64.0</b>	20.8	13.6
Currently in WA, an adult would not usually get a criminal record for possession of a small amount of cannabis.	30.0	<b>34.4</b>	35.6	51.9	<b>25.3</b>	22.8	.000	37.5	<b>30.5</b>	30.4
Currently in WA, being convicted of a cannabis offence can affect a person's ability to find employment.	<b>69.3</b>	8.3	22.4	<b>67.6</b>	11.9	20.5	N.S.	<b>67.7</b>	9.5	21.3
Currently in WA, a person on premises where they know cannabis is being smoked is committing an offence even if they do not smoke it themselves.	<b>42.6</b>	19.5	38.0	<b>39.6</b>	30.7	29.6	N.S.	<b>41.0</b>	23.3	34.6
Currently in WA, the penalty for the possession of a bong/pipe for smoking cannabis is less than the penalty for possession of a small quantity of cannabis.	34.4	<b>14.0</b>	51.6	45.8	<b>18.3</b>	35.8	N.S.	38.2	<b>15.4</b>	45.3

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Sig test was conducted on dichotomised correct and incorrect responses. In each case 'unsure' responses were coded as 'incorrect'.*



### Knowledge of current penalties for cannabis offences under WA law

The tables in this sections report the knowledge of current penalties for cannabis under WA law. These are presented for: the total sample; year 9 students and year 12 students; students who have never tried cannabis and students who have tried cannabis. Correct responses have been shown in bold.

Table 4 reports responses to the following question: Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to a person under 18 caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for their personal use? Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 4: Consequences for a person under the age of 18 caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for personal use – percent of respondents**

Consequence	All N=2583	School Year			Cannabis Use		
		Year 9 N=1604	Year 12 N=975	Sig	Never N=1589	Ever N=934	Sig
	%	%	%		%	%	
<b>Formal caution by police officer</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>77.3</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>A fine</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>.035</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
Attendance at a cannabis education session	60.7	64.3	54.8	.000	63.8	55.7	.000
Appearance at children's drug court	42.1	48.9	30.8	.000	48.5	31.7	.000
<b>Criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>.000</b>
Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding fine	25.2	28	20.9	.000	25.7	24.6	N.S.
Compulsory drug treatment	23.9	30.3	13.3	.000	28.3	17.0	.000
<b>Referral to juvenile justice team</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>.001</b>
<b>Summons to appear in juvenile court</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>.001</b>
<b>Six months sentence in a juvenile detention centre</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>No penalty</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>.000</b>

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction*

The majority (62.8%) of all students correctly identified formal caution by police officer and a fine as potential consequences. Less than one third (28.1%) correctly identified the recording of a criminal offence and less than one quarter, identified the other four potential consequences. More than a half (60.7%) incorrectly identified attendance at an education session as a potential consequence. Some 42.1% of all respondents incorrectly indicated appearance at children's drug court as a potential consequence. Less than one third of respondents incorrectly identified the other two consequences. Each consequence was identified by a similar proportion of year 9 students and students who have never tried cannabis, with year 12 students and students who had tried cannabis also reporting a similar proportion. Table 4 shows that almost all comparisons between years and whether tried or not were significant.

Table 5 reports responses to the following question: Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for their personal use? Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 5: Consequences for an adult caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for personal use – percent of respondents**

Consequence	All N=2583	School Year			Cannabis Use		
		Year 9 N=1604	Year 12 N=975	Sig	Never N=1589	Ever N=934	Sig
	%	%	%		%	%	
<b>A fine</b>	<b>74.1</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>Formal caution by police officer</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>49.9</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>.001</b>
Attendance at a cannabis education session	46.9	49.4	42.7	.001	50.0	41.6	.000
<b>Appearance at drug court</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Summons to appear in court</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>.000</b>
Compulsory drug treatment	30.4	36.9	19.8	.000	35.9	21.2	.000
Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding fine	25.9	28.2	22.1	.001	25.4	26.2	N.S.
<b>Six months jail sentence</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>No penalty</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>.023</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>.000</b>

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction*

Some 74.1% of respondents correctly identified a fine as a potential consequence. Approximately half (52.4%) of the students correctly identified formal caution by a police

officer, although less year 9 students (49.9%) compared to year 12 students (56.4%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 9.48$  df = 1, p = .002) and fewer students who had never tried cannabis (49.3%) compared to students who had tried cannabis (57.4%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 14.59$  df = 1, p = .002) correctly identified this consequence. Some 23.7% of respondents correctly identified six month jail sentence and few students (12.3%) correctly identified no penalty as possible consequences. Approximately one half of respondents incorrectly nominated attendance at cannabis education session with less than a third incorrectly identifying two other consequences. Again each consequence was identified by a similar proportion of year 9 students and students who have never tried cannabis with year 12 students and students who had tried cannabis also reporting a similar proportion.

Table 6 reports responses to the following question: Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught growing a cannabis plant? Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 6: Consequences for an adult caught growing a cannabis plant – percent of respondents**

Consequence	All N=2583	School Year			Cannabis Use		
		Year 9 N=1604	Year 12 N=975	Sig	Never N=1589	Ever N=934	Sig
	%	%	%		%	%	
<b>A fine</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>71.9</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>73.5</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>Criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>57.0</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Appearance at drug court</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Summons to appear in court</b>	<b>47.1</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>.001</b>
Formal caution by police officer	39.1	39.2	39.0	.006	38.6	39.8	.640
<b>Two year jail sentence</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>.000</b>
Attendance at a cannabis education session	32.5	35.2	28.0	.000	33.2	31.4	.367
Compulsory drug treatment	21.6	26.5	13.6	.000	24.2	17.4	.000
Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding fine	22.2	24.0	19.5	.008	21.9	22.3	N.S.
No penalty	9.8	8.7	11.6	.023	6.8	14.4	.000

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction*

The majority of respondents (73.3%) correctly identified a fine as a potential consequence. Some 62.1% of respondents correctly identified criminal conviction recorded, however, more year 9 students (65.6%) than year 12 (56.1%) students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 22.57$  df = 1, p =

.000) and more students who have never tried cannabis (65.1%) compared to students who have tried cannabis (57%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 13.92$  df = 1,  $p = .002$ ) nominated this consequence. This pattern is repeated in the three of the four other correct consequences. Overall, year 9 students and those who had never tried cannabis were more likely to give correct legal consequences for this item. Approximately one in ten (9.8%) of all students indicated that no penalty was a possible consequence. Formal caution by a police officer was incorrectly identified as possible consequence by 39.1% of respondents with the other three incorrect consequences being nominated by at least 20% of respondents.

Table 7 reports responses to the following question: *Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught selling a small amount of cannabis?* Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 7: Consequences for an adult caught selling a small amount of cannabis – percent of respondents**

Consequence	School Year				Cannabis Use		
	All N=2580	Year 9 N=1604	Year 12 N=975	Sig	Never N=1588	Ever N=934	Sig
	%	%	%		%	%	
<b>Criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>74.6</b>	<b>73.7</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>75.1</b>	<b>72.9</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>A fine</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>74.1</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>Summons to appear in court</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>59.4</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>Appearance at drug court</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>.012</b>
<b>Two year jail sentence</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>.000</b>
Formal caution by police officer	32.4	33.5	30.6	.135	30.4	35.5	.013
Attendance at a cannabis education session	30.5	34.5	24.1	.000	31.9	28.2	.048
Compulsory drug treatment	24.0	29.7	14.7	.000	25.6	21.4	.019
Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding fine	21.4	23	18.7	.011	21.2	21.2	N.S.
<b>No penalty (unlikely)</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>.027</b>

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction*

The majority (74.3%) of respondents correctly identified a criminal conviction and a fine as potential consequences. More than half nominated three of the four other correct consequences. Although no penalty would be extremely unlikely according to the law, it is a possible consequence, however only 4.4% of respondents correctly identified it. Between

approximately 20% to 30% of students incorrectly identified four consequences as being correct. The previous pattern of similar proportions of year 9 students and students who have never tried cannabis identifying consequences and year 12 students and students who have tried cannabis was not so apparent with this question.

Table 8 reports responses to the following question: Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to a person under 18 caught selling a small amount of cannabis?

**Table 8: Consequences for a person under 18 caught selling a small amount of cannabis – percent of respondents**

Consequence	All N=2581	School Year			Cannabis Use		
		Year 9 N=1601	Year 12 N=976	Sig	Never N=1618	Ever N=931	Sig
	%	%	%		%	%	
<b>Appearance at children's drug court</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>66.0</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>.008</b>
<b>A fine</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>64.3</b>	<b>55.6</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
<b>Criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>.015</b>
Attendance at a cannabis education session	48.2	51.9	42.3	.000	49.6	45.6	.048
<b>Summons to appear in juvenile court</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>N.S.</b>
Formal caution by police officer	45.0	44.8	45.4	N.S.	43.1	48.2	.020
<b>Two year jail sentence in juvenile detention centre</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>.000</b>
Compulsory drug treatment	24.9	29.9	16.8	.000	27.2	21.5	.001
Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding fine	18.4	20.9	14.3	.000	19.0	17.3	N.S.
<b>No penalty</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>N.S.</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>.012</b>

*N.B. Correct responses are shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction*

More than half the respondents correctly identified three of the six correct consequences. Again very few students correctly (6.3%) identified no penalty as a possible consequence. Almost half (48.2%) the respondents incorrectly nominated attendance at a cannabis education session. More year 9 students (39.8%) than did year 12 students (27.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 40.76$  df = 1,  $p = .000$ ) and more students who had never used cannabis (41.0%)

than students who have tried cannabis (25.2%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 64.26$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ) correctly identified two year jail sentence in a juvenile detention centre.

### MEANING OF PROHIBITION WITH CIVIL PENALTIES

Table 9 reports the frequency in percentages of responses for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students, students who have never tried cannabis and students who have tried cannabis for the statement, If the law regarding cannabis were prohibition with civil penalties, it would mean that: The correct response has been bolded.

**Table 9: Understand meaning of ‘Prohibition with civil penalties’ – percent of respondents**

	All N=2506	Year 9 N=1556	Year 12 N=945	Sig.	Never tried N=1552	Ever tried N=898	Sig.
	%	%	%		%	%	
It would be legal	5.0	6.0	3.8		3.5	8.2	
<b>It would be illegal, a fine but no criminal conviction recorded</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>.013</b>
It would be illegal and a criminal conviction recorded	22.9	26.5	20.0		26.6	19.7	
Unsure	35.0	38.2	34.5		37.5	35.2	

*N.B. Correct responses is shown in bold. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction for dichotomous comparison of correct and incorrect responses.*

Although the majority of respondents (67.8%) did not understand what prohibition with civil penalties means, a higher proportion of year 12 students (41.7%) do understand compared year 9 students (29.2%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 40.10$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). More students who have tried cannabis (36.9%) understand what prohibition with civil penalties mean than those students who have not tried cannabis (32.4%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 4.9$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .013$ ).

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS CANNABIS USE AND CANNABIS LAW

The attitude section of the questionnaire comprised the following:

- Twenty one statements pertaining to attitudes about the cannabis use, potential cannabis related harms and risks and cannabis law requiring a strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or unsure response;
- One multiple response statement relating to reasons why young people use cannabis;
- One statement pertaining to whether respondents believe possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult should be a criminal offence resulting in a criminal record; and
- Two multiple response questions pertaining to why respondents believe possession of a small amount of cannabis should or should not be illegal and result in a criminal record.

**Table 10: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use and Cannabis Law – percent of respondents**

Statement	Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure	Sig.
		%	%	%	%	%	
I would be concerned if my friends were using cannabis	<b>9</b>	35.1	30.3	18.7	7.4	8.5	.000
	<b>12</b>	18.0	32.0	28.1	12.6	9.3	
	<b>All</b>	28.4	30.6	22	9.2	8.7	
I would use cannabis if a friend offered it to me	<b>9</b>	6.7	14.5	20.2	51.6	7.1	.000
	<b>12</b>	8.4	20.5	22.7	39.2	9.3	
	<b>All</b>	7.2	16.6	20.8	46.4	7.8	
I would use cannabis if someone at a party who I didn't know offered it to me	<b>9</b>	3.6	6.7	18.0	66.8	4.9	.000
	<b>12</b>	4.9	9.8	24.1	54.3	6.9	
	<b>All</b>	4.1	7.8	20.1	61.4	5.6	
People my age usually have a good time when affected by cannabis	<b>9</b>	14.6	33.8	13.5	8.0	30.0	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	10.3	38.8	16.3	7.0	27.6	
	<b>All</b>	12.7	35.1	14.3	7.5	28.6	
There are harms that can result from using cannabis	<b>9</b>	45.9	42.2	2.7	3.1	6.1	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	37.9	49.7	3.1	2.9	6.4	
	<b>All</b>	42.4	44.5	2.8	3.0	6.1	

*N.B. Year 9: n=1636; Year 12: n=997; All=2638*

*N.B. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction for dichotomous comparison of agree/strongly agree Vs disagree/strongly disagree.*

**Table 10 cont: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use and Cannabis Law – percent of respondents**

Statement	Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure	Sig.
		%	%	%	%	%	
I would accept a lift in a car where the driver was affected by cannabis	<b>9</b>	2.6	6.0	20.5	63.7	7.2	.000
	<b>12</b>	3.0	14.5	25.5	46.5	10.4	
	<b>All</b>	2.7	9.1	22.1	56.4	8.3	
Monthly use of cannabis by people my age is not dangerous	<b>9</b>	5.0	13.1	33.3	35.1	13.4	.013
	<b>12</b>	4.0	17.0	36.2	24.8	18.0	
	<b>All</b>	4.6	14.4	34.0	31.0	15.0	
Most people who use cannabis will go on to use more dangerous drugs	<b>9</b>	14.5	43.2	17.7	5.3	19.3	.000
	<b>12</b>	7.3	33.0	30.0	6.5	23.3	
	<b>All</b>	11.7	38.9	22.1	5.6	20.6	
The benefits of using cannabis outweigh the harms and risks associated with its use	<b>9</b>	6.5	14.4	20.9	21.7	36.5	.000
	<b>12</b>	4.3	11.2	32.2	22.6	29.7	
	<b>All</b>	5.6	13.1	24.9	21.9	33.7	
Most laws are worth obeying	<b>9</b>	32.1	50.7	9.9	3.1	4.2	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	20.1	61.4	8.6	3.5	6.3	
	<b>All</b>	27.4	54.3	9.3	3.2	5	

*N.B. Year 9: n=1636; Year 12: n=997; All=2638*

*N.B. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction for dichotomous comparison of agree/strongly agree Vs disagree/strongly disagree.*



**Table 10 cont: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use and Cannabis Law – percent of respondents**

Statement	Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure	Sig.
Police deserve respect for their role in maintaining law and order	<b>9</b>	29.5	50.9	8.9	5.0	5.7	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	19.6	61.0	6.9	4.5	8.0	
	<b>All</b>	25.4	54.2	8.0	4.7	6.5	
Cannabis should be legally available for people over 18	<b>9</b>	12.2	22.3	26.4	29.1	9.9	.009
	<b>12</b>	9.1	27.9	26.5	20.6	15.8	
	<b>All</b>	10.9	24.1	26.0	25.5	12.0	
Cannabis should be legally available for people under 18	<b>9</b>	7.2	9.4	26.8	50.0	6.5	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	5.7	9.4	37.5	35.1	12.3	
	<b>All</b>	6.5	9.2	30.4	43.6	8.5	
The current cannabis laws, which apply to adults in WA, deter people under 18 from using cannabis	<b>9</b>	9.1	22.0	14.5	6.6	47.8	.000
	<b>12</b>	5.1	18.8	27.1	13.4	35.7	
	<b>All</b>	7.4	20.2	18.8	9.0	42.2	
The sale of a small amount of cannabis from one adult to another should be a criminal offence	<b>9</b>	19.6	38.5	21.0	10.2	10.6	.000
	<b>12</b>	13.9	32.5	28.2	8.9	16.4	
	<b>All</b>	17.1	35.3	23.1	9.4	12.4	
The sale of a small amount of cannabis by and adult to a person under 18 should be a criminal offence	<b>9</b>	41.1	34.3	11.9	5.7	7.0	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	27.5	41.6	13.4	5.5	12.1	
	<b>All</b>	35.6	36.5	12.2	5.5	8.8	

*N.B. Year 9: n=1636; Year 12: n=997; All=2638*

*N.B. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction for dichotomous comparison of agree/strongly agree Vs disagree/strongly disagree.*

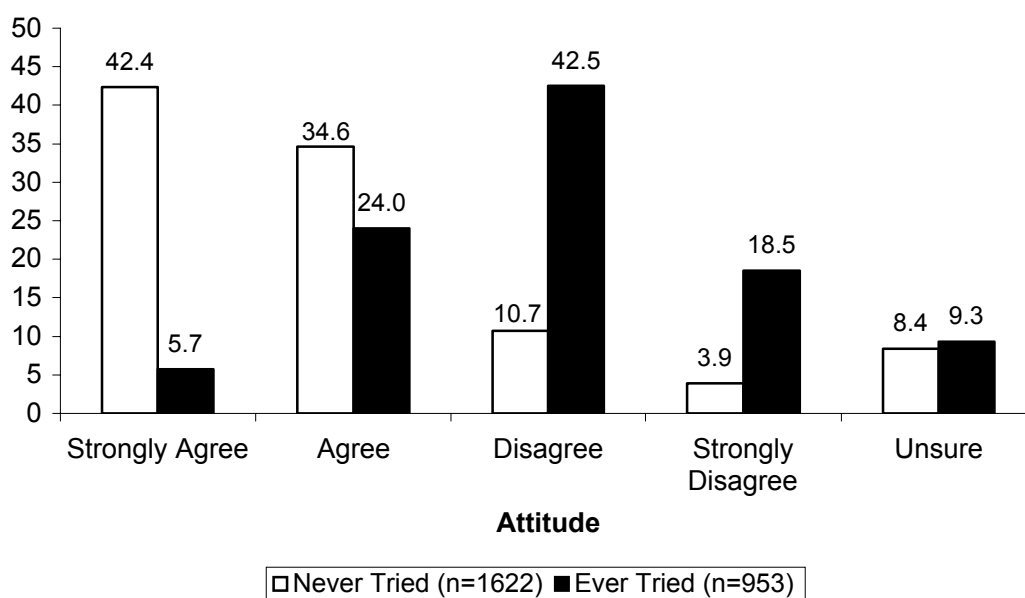
**Table 10 cont: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use and Cannabis Law – percent of respondents**

Statement	Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure	Sig.
		%	%	%	%	%	
The sale of a small amount of cannabis by a person under 18 to another person under 18 should result in an appearance at the juvenile justice court	<b>9</b>	25.5	36.9	18.0	8.0	11.6	.009
	<b>12</b>	18.3	35.8	21.7	7.3	16.9	
	<b>All</b>	22.4	35.7	19	7.6	13.3	
It should not be illegal for a person under 18 to give a small amount of cannabis to a friend	<b>9</b>	11.2	20.4	28.2	31.0	9.2	.000
	<b>12</b>	9.3	28.3	30.2	18.7	13.6	
	<b>All</b>	10.2	22.9	28.3	25.8	10.6	
Driving a car while affected by cannabis should be a criminal offence	<b>9</b>	30.7	41.2	12.7	5.2	10.2	.005
	<b>12</b>	30.2	43.9	9.7	3.6	12.7	
	<b>All</b>	30.0	41.4	11.3	4.5	10.9	
It is very unlikely that a person my age would be caught by the police for using cannabis	<b>9</b>	10.4	26.9	30.4	13.6	18.6	N.S.
	<b>12</b>	10.6	29.9	30.7	10.1	18.8	
	<b>All</b>	10.3	27.6	30.1	12.1	18.4	
There has been a lot in the media lately about cannabis law	<b>9</b>	7.1	27.6	20.6	6.8	37.8	.000
	<b>12</b>	5.1	26.1	28.7	8.9	31.2	
	<b>All</b>	6.3	26.6	23.2	7.5	34.8	

*N.B. Year 9: n=1636; Year 12: n=997; All=2638*

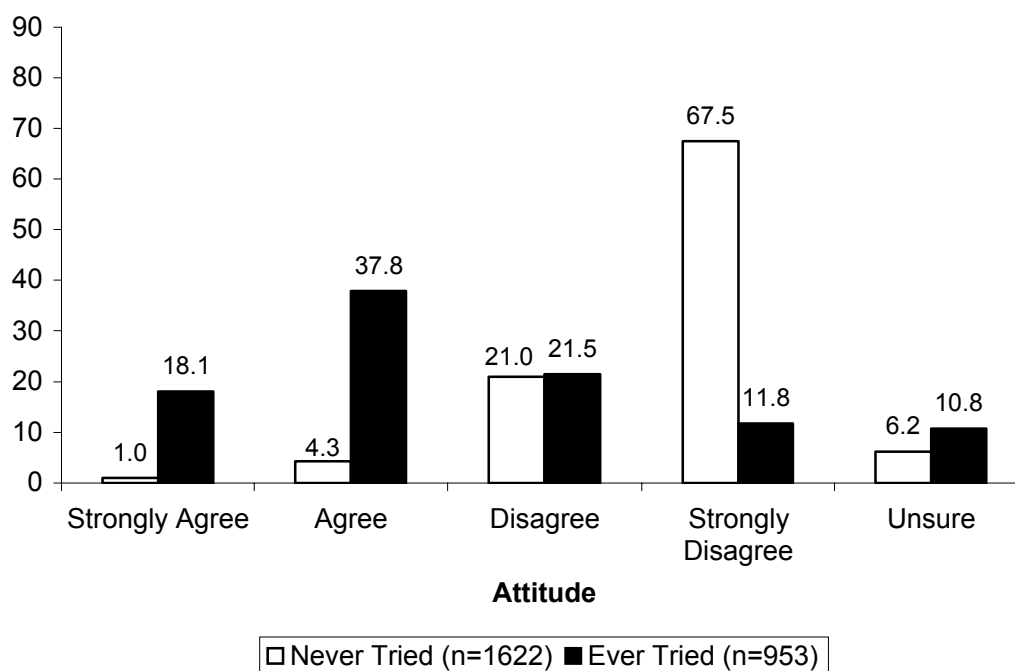
*N.B. Significance test is Chi Square with continuity correction for dichotomous comparison of agree/strongly agree Vs disagree/strongly disagree.*

Table 10 reports the statements and frequencies for the total sample, year nines and year twelves for the statement *I would be concerned if my friends were using cannabis*. While the majority (59.0%) of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, a higher proportion of year 9 students (65.4%) compared to year 12 students (50.0%) agreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 65.16$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Figure 2 shows that while 77.0% of those who had never tried cannabis agreed with the statement, only 29.7% of those who had tried the drug did so. ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 630.51$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



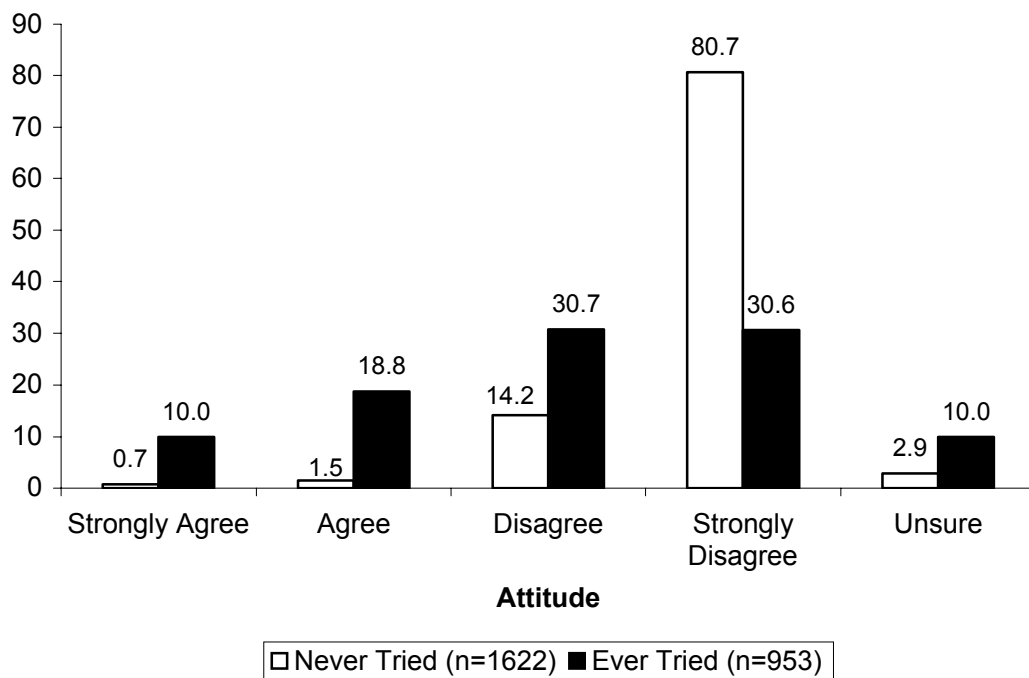
**Figure 2:** 'I would be concerned if my friends were using cannabis' by whether tried cannabis – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that the majority of students (82.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *I would use cannabis if a friend offered it to me*, however more year 9 students (71.8%) compared with year 12 students (61.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 23.49$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Figure 3 shows that while 88.5% of those who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement while 33.3% of those who had ever used cannabis did so. ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 918.77$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



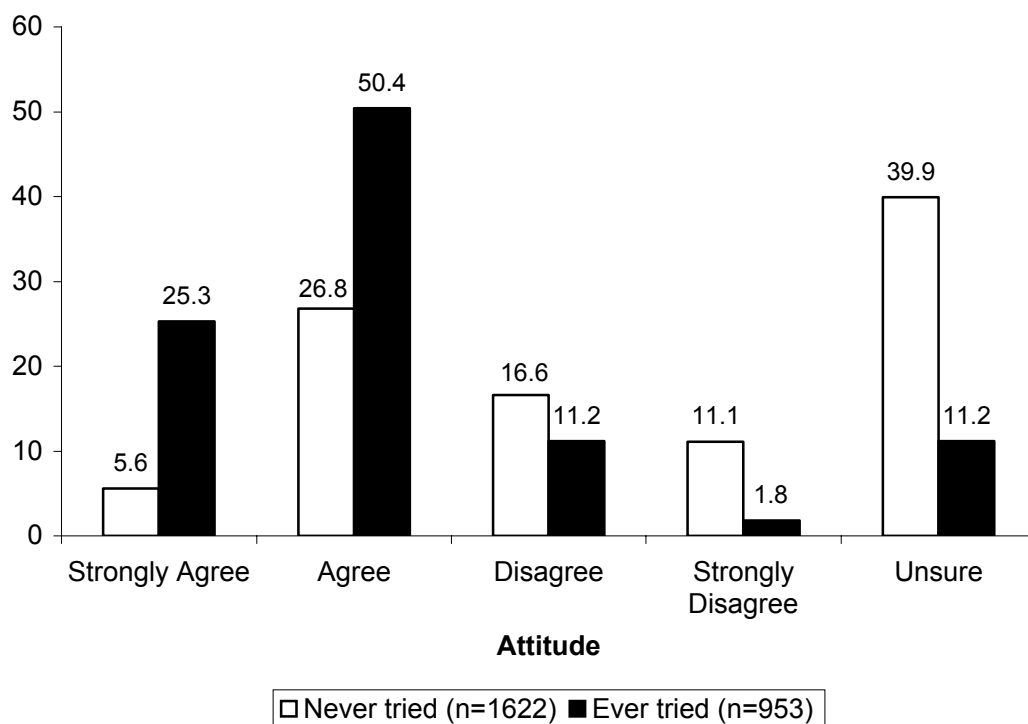
**Figure 3: 'I would use cannabis if a friend offered it to me' by whether tried cannabis' – percent of respondents**

Table 10 shows that the majority of students (81.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *I would use cannabis if someone at party who I didn't know very well offered it to me*. More year 9 students (84.8%) compared to year 12 students (78.4%) disagreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 12.46$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Figure 4 shows that while 94.9% of those who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement while 61.3% of those who had ever used cannabis did so. ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 437.32$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



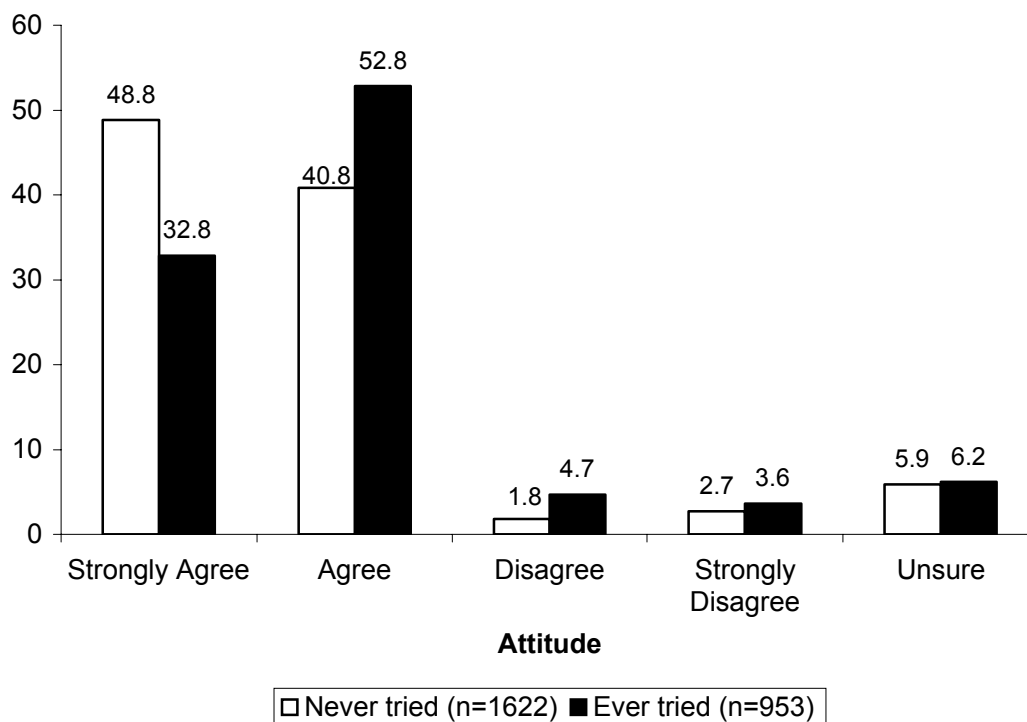
**Figure 4:** 'I would use cannabis if someone at party who I didn't know very well offered it to me' – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that while 47.8% of all students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *People my age usually have good time when affected by cannabis*, 21.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 28.6% of respondents were unsure. There was no significant difference between years 9 and 12 students. ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.30$  df = 1, N.S.). However, Figure 5 shows that while 32.4% of those who had never tried cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 75.7% of those who had ever used cannabis did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 202.75$  df = 1, p = .000).



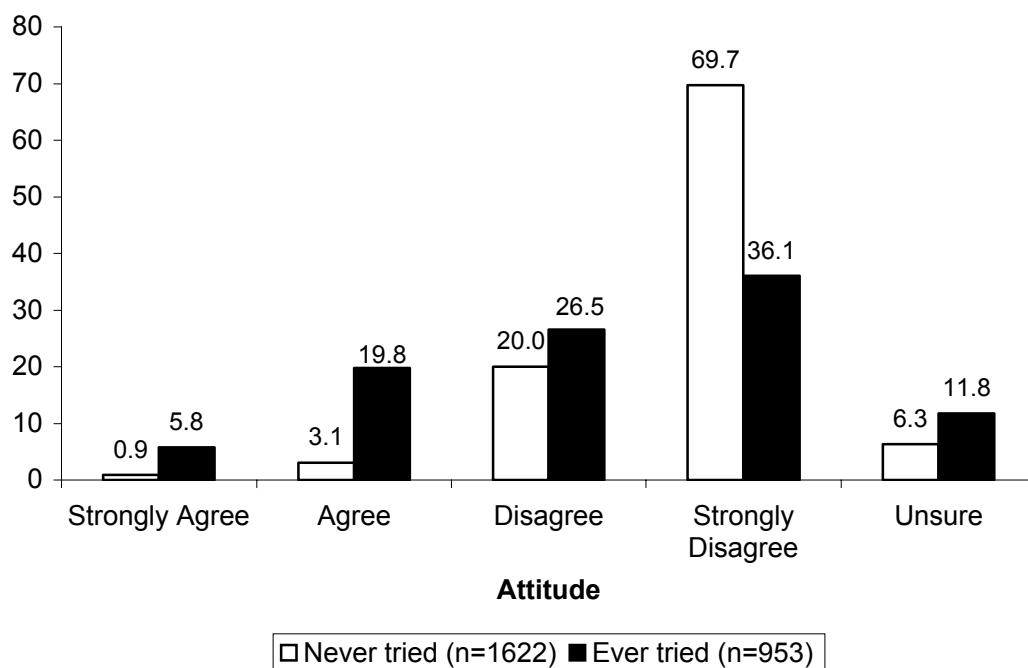
**Figure 5:** 'People my age usually have good time when affected by cannabis' – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that the majority (86.9%) of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *There are harms that can result from using cannabis*. There was no significant difference between years 9 and 12 students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.37$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.). Figure 6 shows that while 89.6% of those who had never tried cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 85.6% of those who had ever used cannabis did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 15.32$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .000$ ).



**Figure 6:** 'There are harms that can result from using cannabis' – percent of respondents

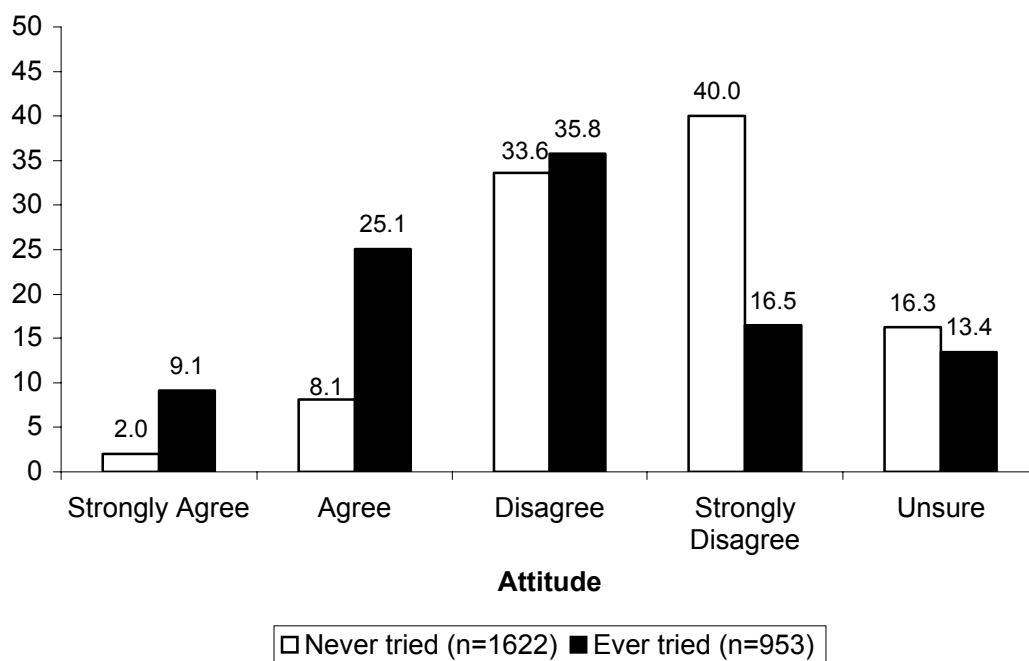
While Table 10 shows that the majority of students (64.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement: *I would accept a lift in a car where the driver was affected by cannabis*, a higher proportion of year 9 students (70.9%) disagreed/ strongly disagreed compared with year 12 students (56.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 51.03$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 7 shows that while 89.7% of students who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, only 62.6% of those that had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 286.55$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



**Figure 7: 'I would accept a lift in a car where the driver was affected by cannabis' – percent of respondents**

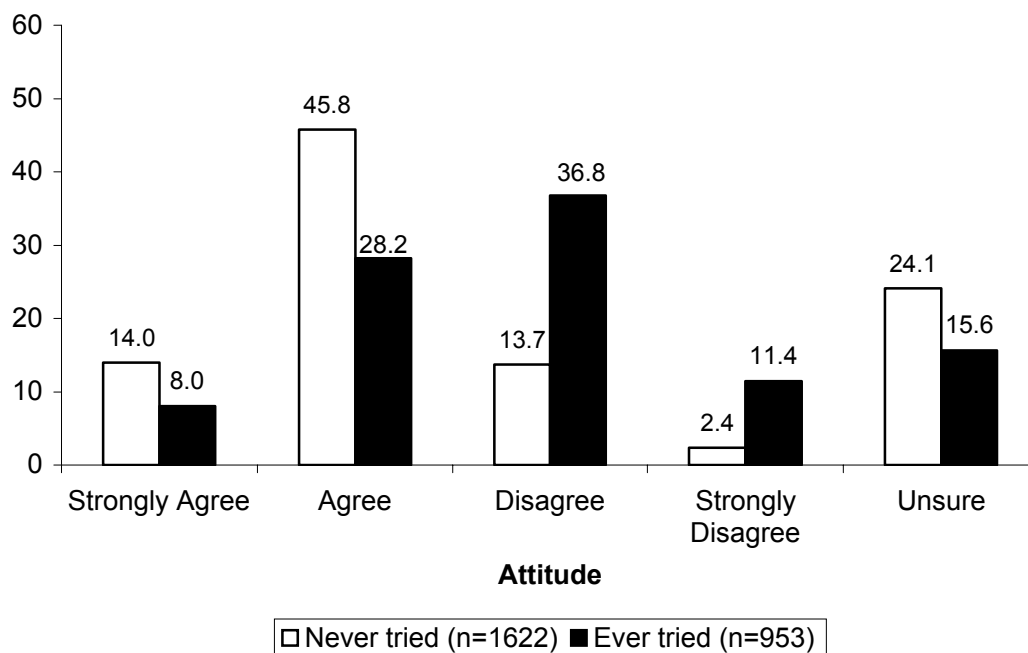


While Table 10 shows that the majority of students (65.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *Monthly use of cannabis by people my age is not dangerous*, a higher proportion of year 9 students (68.4%) disagreed/ strongly disagreed compared with year 12 students (61.0%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 6.214$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .013$ ). Figure 8 shows that while 73.6% of students who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, only 52.3% of those that had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 220.72$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



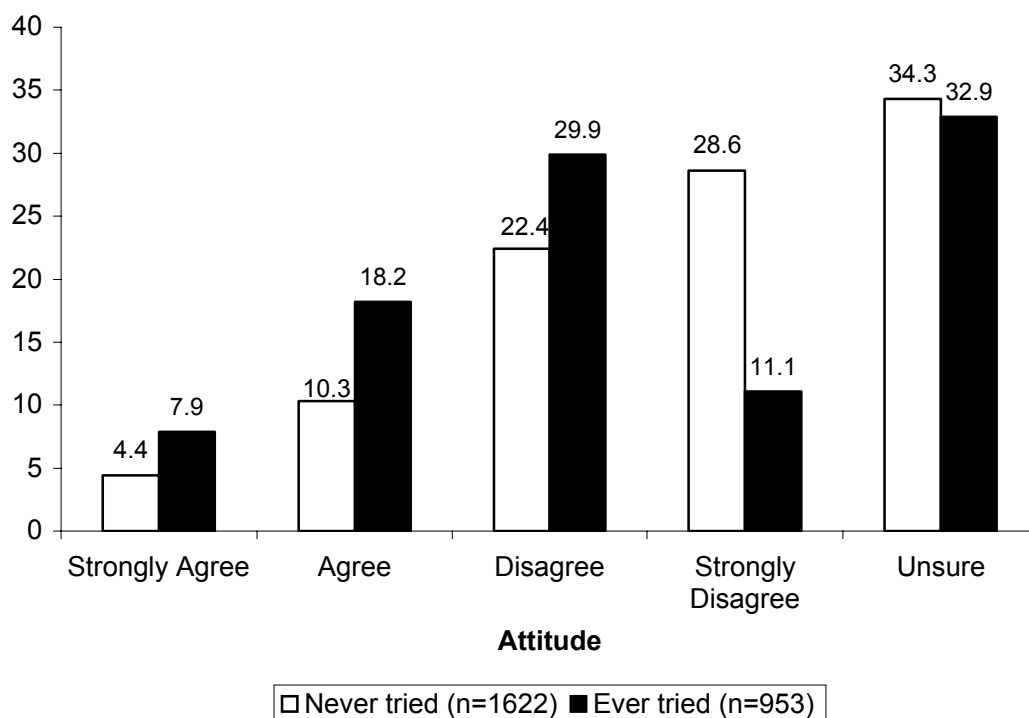
**Figure 8:** 'Monthly use of cannabis by people my age is not dangerous' – percent of respondents

Although Table 10 shows that approximately one half of students (50.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *Most people who use cannabis will go on to use more dangerous drugs*, a higher proportion of year 9 (57.7%) students agreed/strongly agreed compared to year 12 students (40.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 74.69$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 9 shows that although 59.8% of those students who had never tried cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, only 36.2% of those who had tried cannabis did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 271.98$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



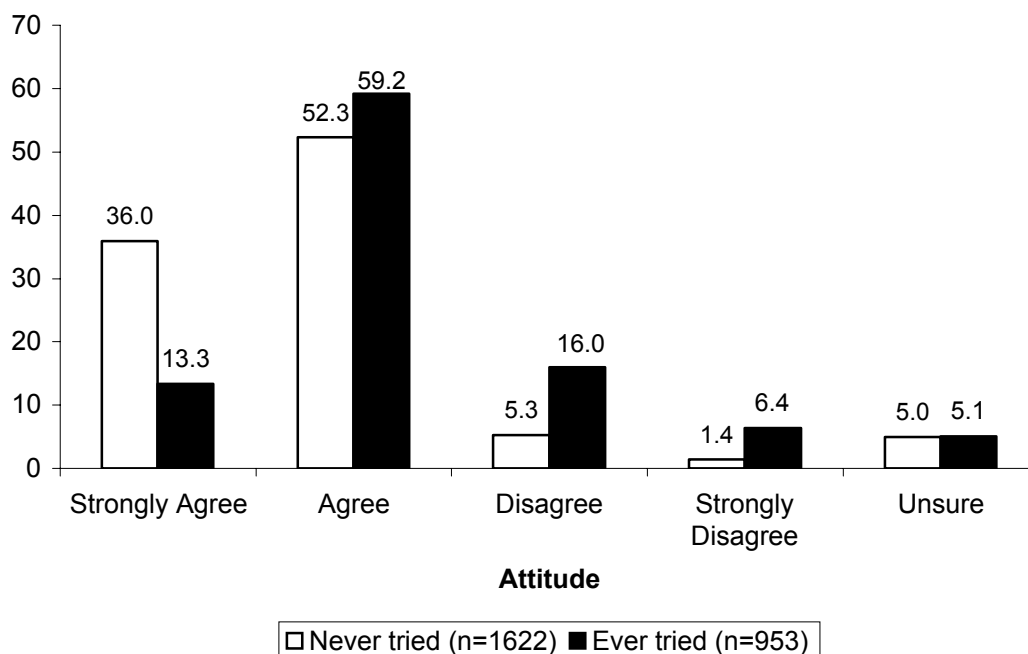
**Figure 9: 'Most people who use cannabis will go on to use more dangerous drugs' – percent of respondents**

Table 10 shows that (46.8%) of all students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *The benefits of using cannabis outweigh the harms and risks associated with its use*. Year 12 students (42.6%) were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement than year 9 students (54.8%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 23.57$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 10 shows that 51.0% of students who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 41.0% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 51.93$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



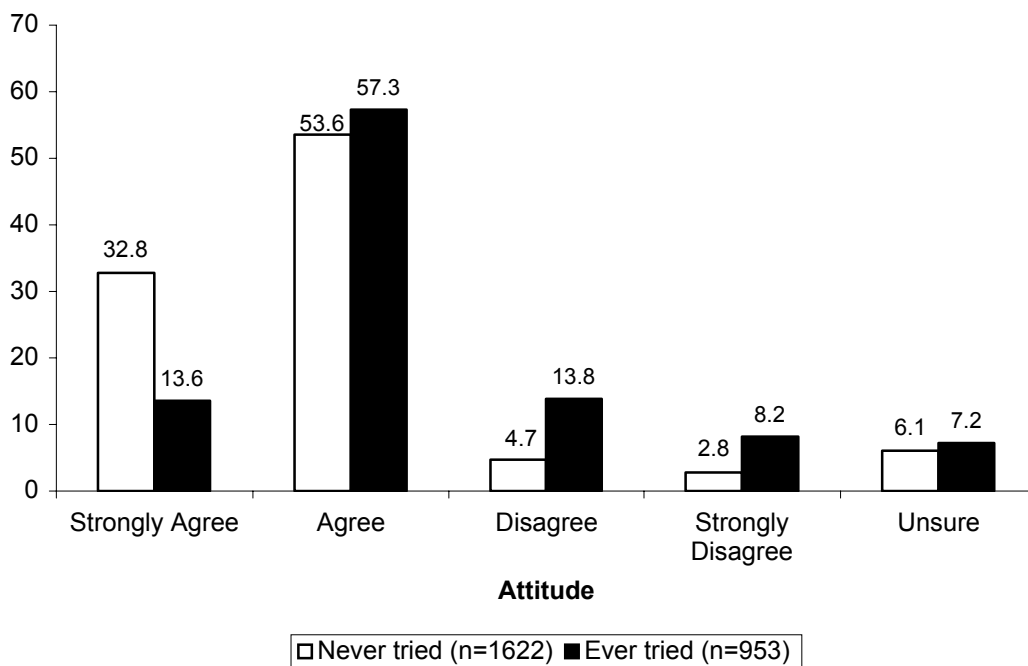
**Figure 10:** ‘The benefits of using cannabis outweigh the harms and risks associated with its use’ – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that the vast majority (81.7%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *Most laws are worth obeying*. There were no significant differences between year 9 and year 12 respondents on this statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.16$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.). Figure 11 shows that 88.3% of students who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement compared to 72.5% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 134.27$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



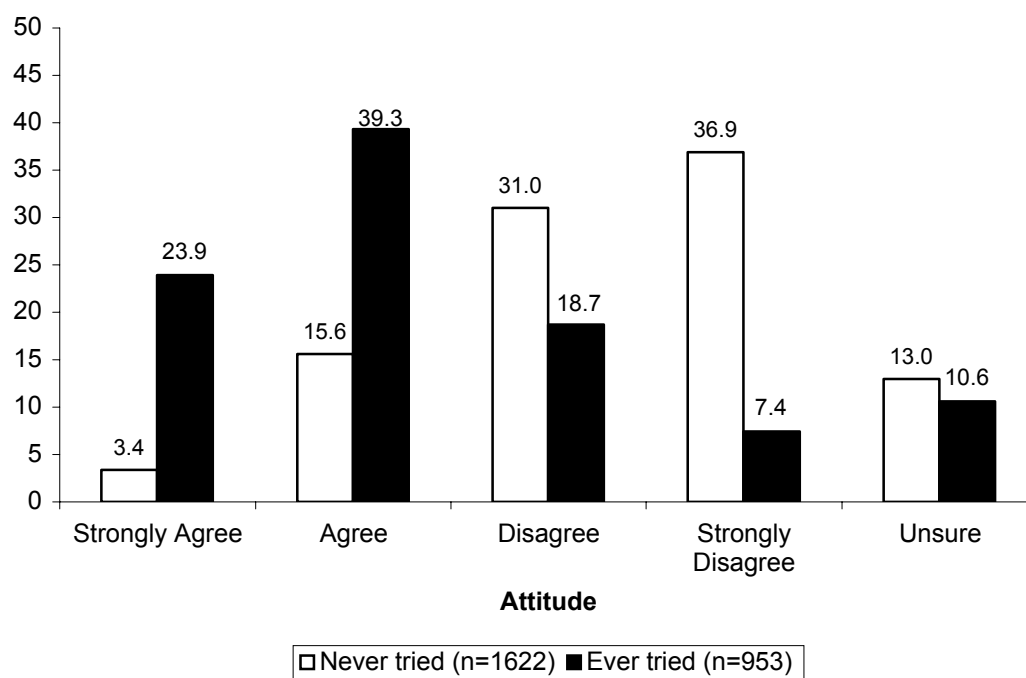
**Figure 11: 'Most laws are worth obeying' – percent of respondents**

Table 10 shows that while the majority (79.6%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *Police deserve respect for their role in maintaining law and order*. There was no significant difference between year 9 and year 12 students 61% of year 12 students on this variable ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 2.65$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.). Figure 12 shows that 86.4% of students who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement compared to 70.9% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 113.81$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



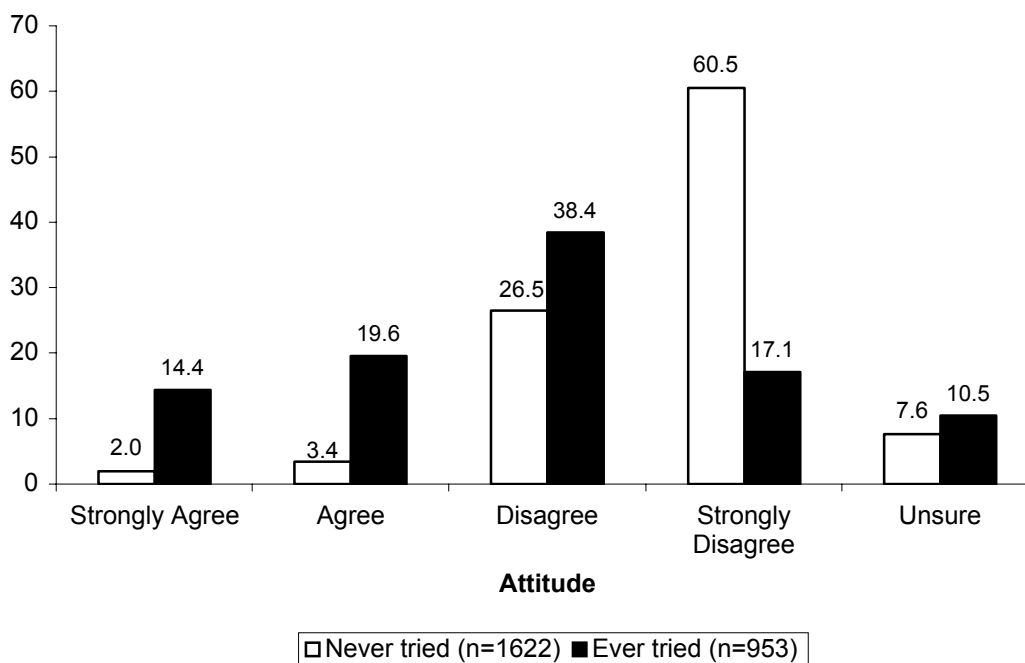
**Figure 12: ‘Police deserve respect for their role in maintaining law and order’ – percent of respondents**

Table 10 shows that 51.5% of all students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *Cannabis should be legally available for people over 18*. Year 9 students (55.5%) were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement than year 12 students (47.1%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 6.77$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Figure 13 shows that 67.9% of students who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 26.1% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 521.35$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



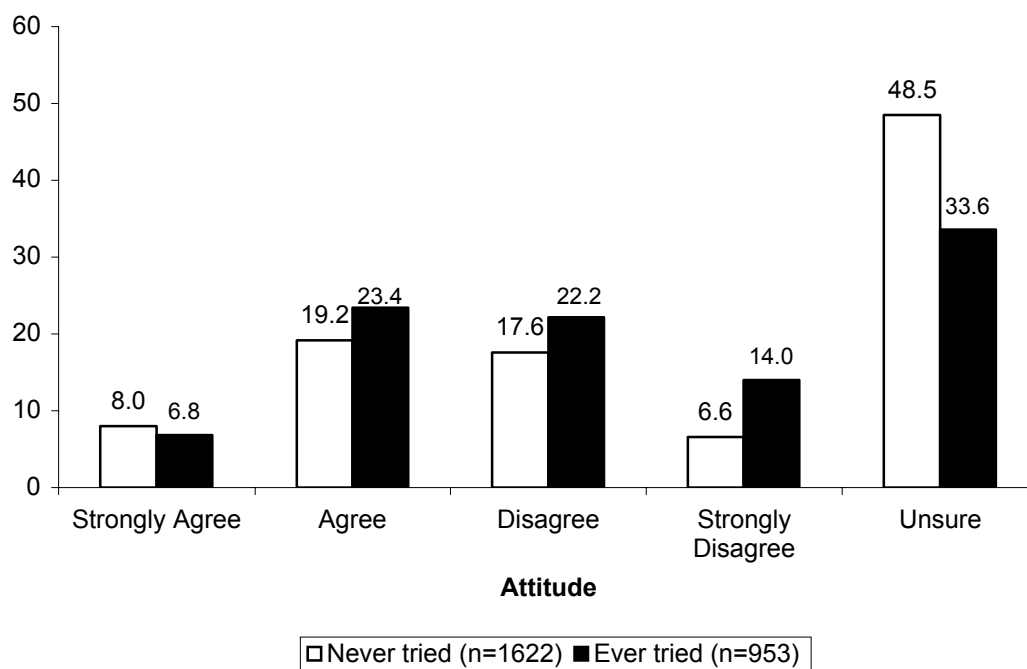
**Figure 13: 'Cannabis should be legally available for people over 18' – percent of respondents**

Table 10 shows that over 74.0% of all respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *Cannabis should be legally available for people under 18*. There were no significant differences between year 9 and 12 respondents ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.94$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.). Figure 14 shows that 87.0% of students who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 55.5% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 382.15$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



**Figure 14: ‘Cannabis should be legally available for people under 18’ – percent of respondents**

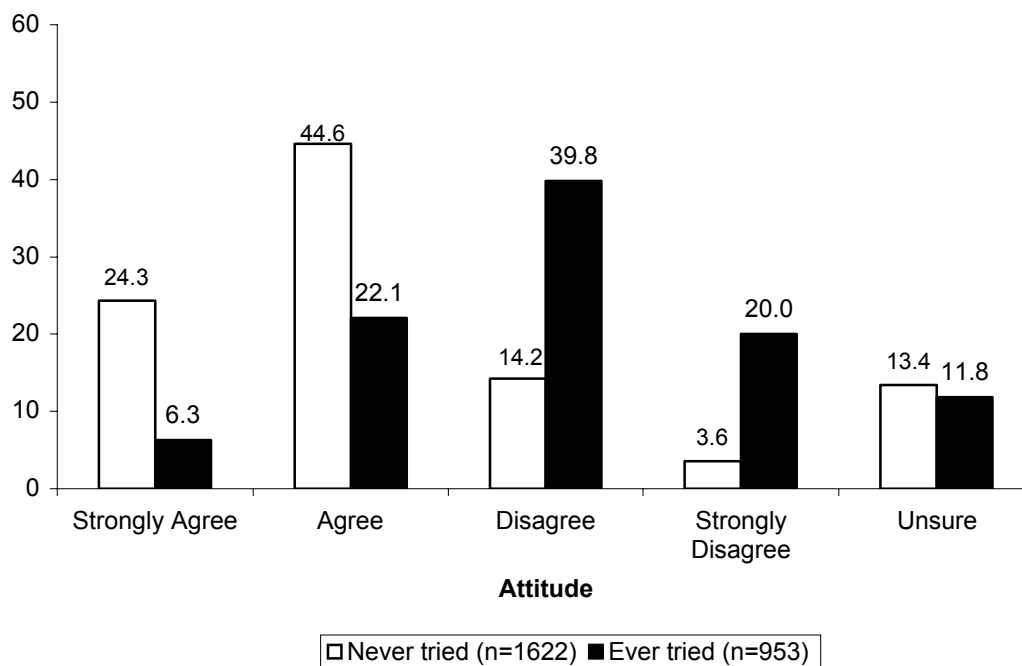
Table 10 shows that while roughly equal proportions of the sample agreed /strongly agreed (27.6%) or disagreed /strongly disagreed (27.8%) with the statement: *The current cannabis laws, which apply to adults in WA, deter people under 18 from using cannabis*, a larger proportion of the sample (42.2%) were unsure. A larger proportion of year 9 students (31.1%) agreed/ strongly agreed, compared with year 12 students (23.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 72.04$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 15 shows that while 24.2% of those who had never used cannabis disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 36.2% of those who had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 7.52$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .006$ ).



**Figure 15:** 'The current cannabis laws, which apply to adults in WA, deter people under 18 from using cannabis' – percent of respondents

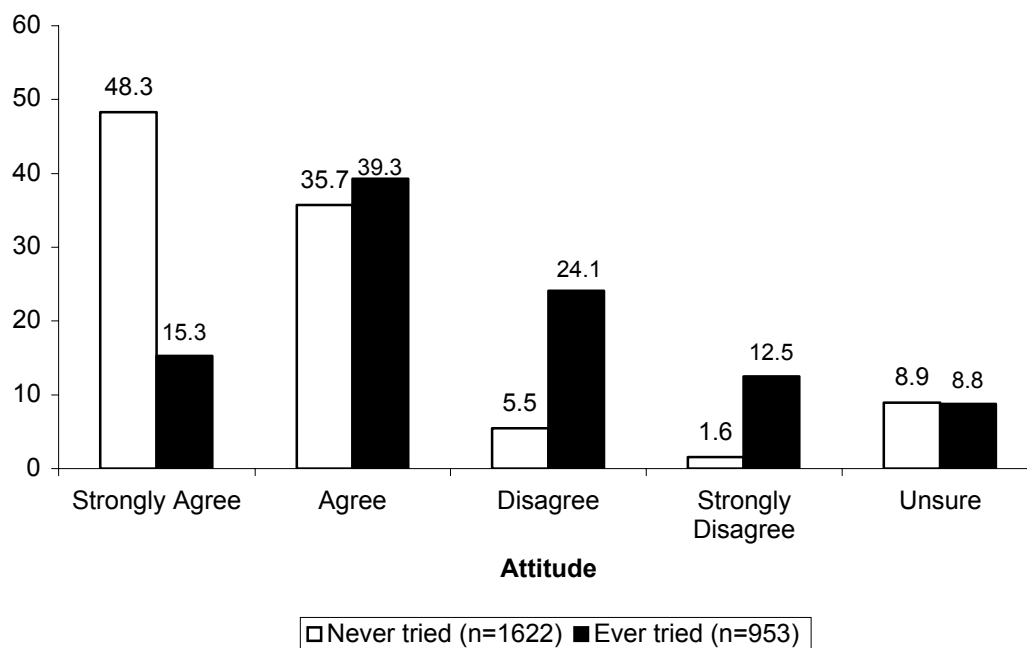


Table 10 shows that (52.4%) of all respondents agreed with the statement: *The sale of a small amount of cannabis from one adult to another should be a criminal offence*. More year 9 students (58.1%) compared with year 12 students (46.4%) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 19.39$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 16 shows that while 68.9% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, only 28.4% of those who had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 487.69$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



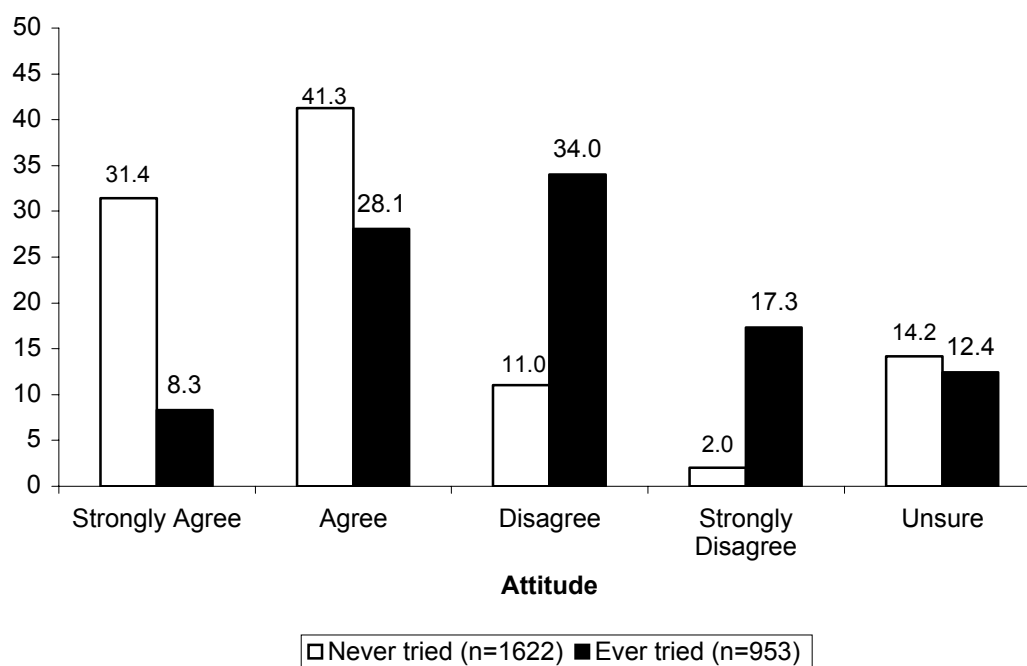
**Figure 16:** 'The sale of a small amount of cannabis from one adult to another should be a criminal offence' – percent of respondents

Overall, 72.1% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *The sale of a small amount of cannabis by and adult to a person under 18 should be a criminal offence*. There were no significant differences between year 9 and 12 students. This is shown in Table 10. Figure 17 shows that while 84.0% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, only 54.6% of those who had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 356.75$  df = 1, p = .000).



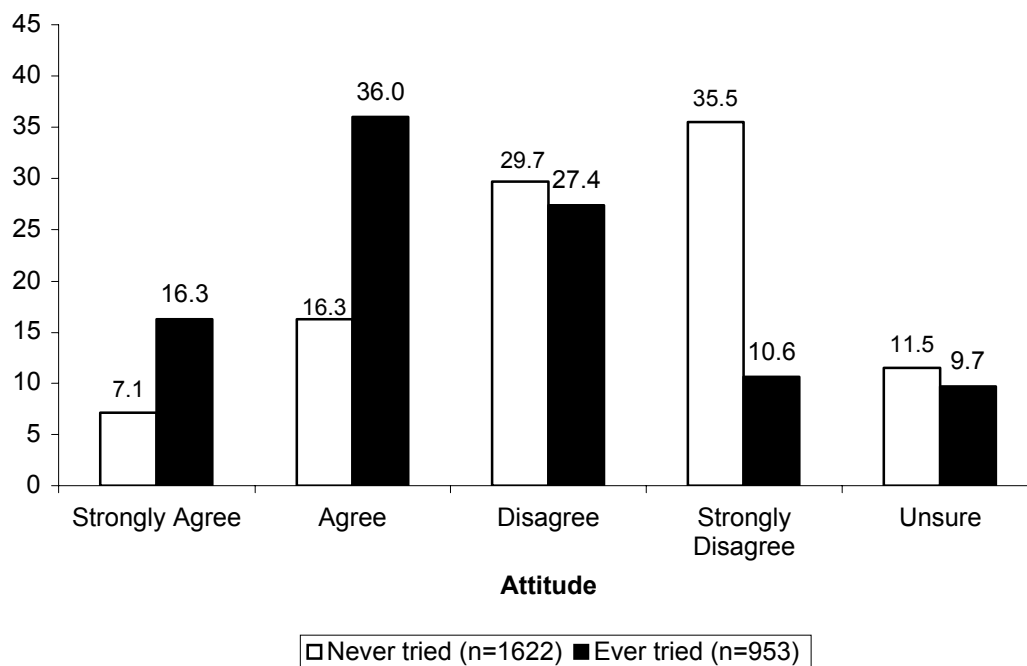
**Figure 17:** 'The sale of a small amount of cannabis by and adult to a person under 18 should be a criminal offence' – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that while 58.1% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *The sale of a small amount of cannabis by a person under 18 to another person under 18 should result in an appearance at the juvenile justice court.* A larger proportion of year 9 (62.4%) compared to year 12 (54.1%) students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 6.90$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ) agreed with the statement. Figure 18 shows that while 72.7% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, only 36.4% of those who had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 448.61$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



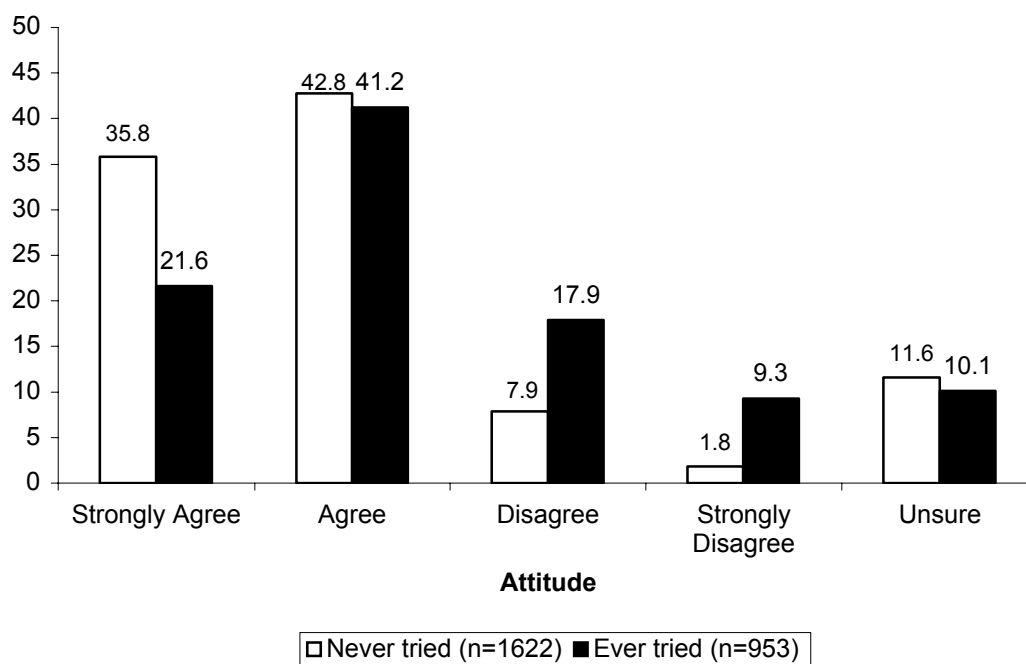
**Figure 18:** 'The sale of a small amount of cannabis by a person under 18 to another person under 18 should result in an appearance at the juvenile justice court' – percent of respondents

More than half (54.1%) the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *It should not be illegal for a person under 18 to give a small amount of cannabis to a friend.* More year 9 students (59.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to year 12 students (48.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 16.57$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 19 shows that while 25.3% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 52.3% of those who had ever used the drug did so ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 220.89$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



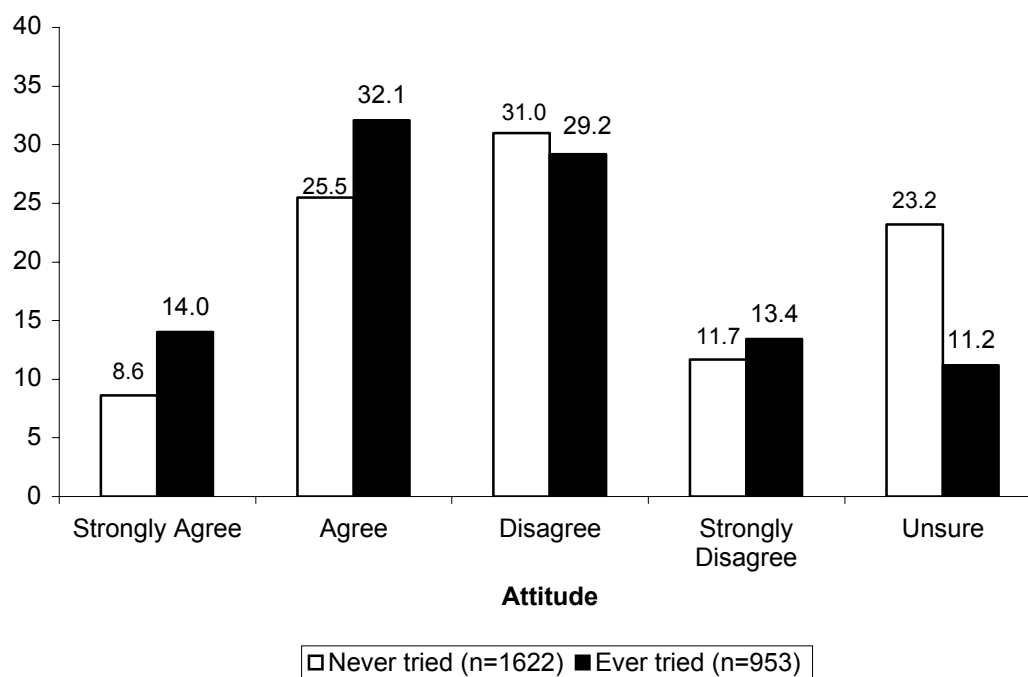
**Figure 19:** 'It should not be illegal for a person under 18 to give a small amount of cannabis to a friend' – percent of respondents

Table 10 shows that 71.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *Driving a car while affected by cannabis should be a criminal offence*. A greater proportion of year 12 students (74.1%) compared to year 9 (71.9%) students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 7.77$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Figure 20 shows that 78.6% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, compared to only 62.8% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 130.63$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



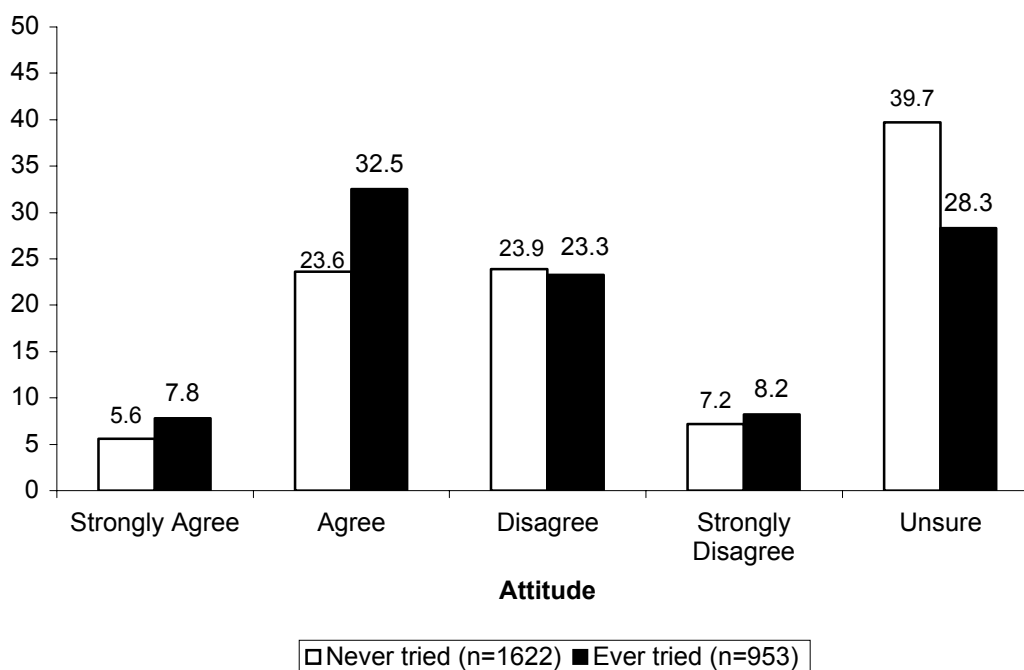
**Figure 20:** 'Driving a car while affected by cannabis should be a criminal offence' – percent of respondents

Table shows that opinion regarding the statement: *It is very unlikely that a person my age would be caught by the police for using cannabis*, was divided. Although 37.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 42.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. There were no significant differences between year 9 and year 12 students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 2.86$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.) Figure 21 shows that while 34.1% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 46.1% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 11.02$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ).



**Figure 21:** 'It is very unlikely that a person my age would be caught by the police for using cannabis' – percent of respondents

Roughly equal proportions of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (32.9%) and disagreed or strongly disagreed (30.7%) with the statement: *There has been a lot in the media lately about cannabis law*. A higher proportion of year 12 students (37.6%) compared to year 9 students (27.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 17.51$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Figure 22 shows that while 29.2% of those who had never used cannabis agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, compared to 40.3% of those who had ever used the drug ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 9.13$   $df = 1$ ,  $p = .003$ ).



**Figure 22: ‘There has been a lot in the media lately about cannabis law’ – percent of respondents**

### REASONS WHY YOUNG PEOPLE USE CANNABIS

Table 11 reports responses to the following statement: *I think people my age use cannabis for the following reasons*. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified reason to 15, the least commonly identified reason. *Makes them feel good* was the reason more than 80% of all respondents identified as the most common reason why young people use cannabis. This was the number one ranked reason for all sub groups of students except year 9 students (rank 2, 78.6%) and students who had never tried cannabis (rank 3, 77.4%). *To appear cool*, was the most commonly identified reason by both of these groups (year 9, 81%; never tried, 83.2%). However, year 12 students and students who had tried cannabis ranked this reason seven (59.8%) and eight (55.6%) respectively. The second most commonly identified reason by all respondents (74.4%) was *their friends use*. *To have fun*, was ranked second by year 12 students (74.1%) and students who had tried cannabis (81.5%). *Pressure from friends to use*, was ranked fourth by both year 9 students

(69.9%) and students who have never tried cannabis (72.0%) but was ranked eighth by year 12 students (51.0%) and ninth by students who have used cannabis (47.0%). Less than 13% of all respondents identified, *it's a safe drug*, as a reason why young people use cannabis. It was the least commonly identified reason by all sub groups of students.

**Table 11: Reasons people my age give for using cannabis – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=2602)	Yr 9 (n=1613)	Yr 12 (n=988)	Never tried (n=1605)	Ever tried (n=946)
	%	%	%	%	%
Makes them feel good	80.2 (1)	78.6 (2)	83.0 (1)	77.4 (3)	85.1 (1)
Their friends use	74.4 (2)	77.0 (3)	70.2 (3)	79.5 (2)	65.8 (4)
To appear cool	73 (3)	81.0 (1)	59.8 (7)	83.2 (1)	55.6 (8)
To have fun	70.9 (4)	69.0 (6)	74.1 (2)	64.7 (6)	81.5 (2)
To experiment	67.8 (5)	69.4 (5)	65.4 (4)	68.3 (5)	67.5 (3)
Pressure from friends to use	62.7 (6)	69.9 (4)	51.0 (8)	72.0 (4)	47.0 (9)
They're curious	59.4 (7)	57.5 (7)	62.8 (5)	59.7 (7)	59.4 (6)
Boredom	56.4 (8)	53.9 (8)	60.5 (6)	52.8 (8)	62.7 (5)
Relieves stress	48.3 (9)	48.8 (9)	47.5 (9)	42.6 (9)	58.1 (7)
Everyone uses it	34.4 (10)	40.0 (10)	25.0 (11)	37.0 (10)	29.8 (11)
Its easy to get	27.7 (11)	22.8 (12)	35.7 (10)	21.3 (12)	38.8 (10)
Its better than alcohol	19.9 (13)	19.2 (13)	21.0 (13)	14.2 (14)	29.3 (12)
Its cheap	19.1 (14)	16.4 (14)	23.4 (12)	15.6 (13)	25.2 (13)
It's a safe drug	12.4 (15)	10.3 (15)	15.9 (15)	7.1 (15)	21.6 (15)
Other	23.4 (12)	27.0 (11)	17.6 (14)	22.5 (11)	24.9 (14)



### Should the Possession of a Small Amount of Cannabis by an Adult for Personal Use be a Criminal Offence?

Table 12 reports frequencies for the following question: *Should the possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use be a criminal offence, resulting in a criminal record?*

**Table 12: Should possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use be a criminal offence?**

Response	All (n=2593)	Yr 9 (n=1601)	Yr 12 (n=997)	Never tried (n=1605)	Ever tried (n=946)
YES	33.2%	50.8%	33.5%	59.5%	18.3%
NO	65.8%	49.2%	66.5%	40.5%	81.7%

Although the majority of year 12 students (66.5%) indicated that possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use should not be a criminal offence, resulting in a criminal record, about half the year 9 students (50.8%) indicated that it should ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 73.44$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). While 59.5% of those who had never tried cannabis thought that it should, 81.7% of those who had tried the drug said that it should not ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 409.99$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

### Reasons Why the Possession of a Small Amount of Cannabis by an Adult for Personal SHOULD be a Criminal Offence

Those who said that possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use SHOULD be a criminal offence resulting in a criminal record were asked to indicate their reasons from a list of 5. Respondents could choose more than one response. These data are presented in Table 13. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified reason to 5, the least commonly identified reason.

The two most commonly identified reasons why possession should result in a criminal record by all respondents (66.1%) were; *there are harmful health effects* and *Stops people from using cannabis*. The least most commonly identified reason (27.1%) was: *Helps police do their job*.

**Table 13: Reasons why the possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use SHOULD be a criminal offence – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=1189) %	Yr 9 (n=851) %	Yr 12 (n=335) %	Never tried (n=963) %	Ever tried (n=169) %
There are harmful health effects	66.1 (1)	68.6 (1)	60.0 (2)	70.3 (1)	49.7 (2)
Stops people from using	66.1 (1)	66.7 (2)	64.5 (1)	69.4 (2)	55.6 (1)
Leads to other drug use	55.4 (3)	57.7 (3)	49.9 (3)	57.7 (3)	47.3 (3)
Helps police do their job	27.1 (5)	28.4 (5)	23.3 (5)	26.3 (5)	30.2 (5)
Other	30.3 (4)	30.2 (4)	30.1 (4)	28.5 (4)	39.1 (4)

**Reasons why the possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal SHOULD NOT be a criminal offence**

Those who said that possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use SHOULD NOT be a criminal offence resulting in a criminal record were asked to indicate their reasons from a list of 5. Respondents could choose more than one response. These data are presented in Table 14. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified reason to 11, the least commonly identified reason.

*Private use of small amounts doesn't hurt others*, was identified by 66.9% of all respondents as the major reason why possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult should not result in a criminal record. The second ranked reason was: *Police can focus on more serious offences*, (64.2%). The majority of reasons were identified by similar proportions of students in each sub group. However only 24.2% of year 12 students (rank 9) identified, *Will stop people using harder drugs*, compared to 41.4% of year 9 students (rank 5) and 33.6% of all respondents. The least most commonly identified reason across all sub groups was, *Cannabis is not a harmful drug*.

**Table 14: Reasons why the possession of a small amount of cannabis by an adult for personal use SHOULD NOT be a criminal offence – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=1506) %	Yr 9 (n=822) %	Yr 12 (n=682) %	Never tried (n=712) %	Ever tried (n=775) %
Private use of small amounts doesn't hurt others	66.9 (1)	67.8 (1)	65.8 (1)	60.1 (1)	73.7 (1)
Police can focus on more serious offences	64.2 (2)	65.2 (2)	63.0 (2)	57.9 (2)	70.2 (2)
No worse than alcohol or tobacco	50.3 (3)	51.0 (3)	49.4 (3)	36.0 (3)	63.4 (3)
Many people use cannabis	43.6 (4)	45.7 (4)	41.1 (4)	30.8 (4)	55.2 (4)
Will stop people using harder drugs	33.6 (5)	41.4 (5)	24.2 (9)	28.4 (5)	38.7 (7)
Cannabis use is a health not law issue	39.4 (6)	40.6 (6)	38.0 (5)	34.0 (6)	44.0 (5)
Criminal charge too harsh	36.1 (7)	38.3 (7)	33.6 (6)	29.6 (7)	42.1 (6)
Would reduce involvement in crime	29.6 (8)	29.1 (8)	30.2 (8)	25.1 (8)	33.8 (8)
Less people will use to defy authority	28.8 (9)	26.2 (10)	32.0 (7)	24.2 (9)	33.4 (9)
Cannabis is not a harmful drug	18.1 (11)	22.3 (11)	14.5 (11)	11.1 (11)	25.8 (10)
Other	24.6 (10)	28.7 (9)	19.8 (10)	27.2 (10)	22.2 (11)

## PATTERNS OF USE

The patterns of use section of the questionnaire comprised the following:

One questions pertaining to opportunity to use alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs;

Four questions pertaining to frequency of use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other illegal drugs;

One question pertaining to simultaneous use of alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs.

### Opportunity to use alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs

Table 15 reports the proportion of students who have been offered or had the opportunity to use alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs. The majority of respondents (86.4%) have been offered or had the opportunity to use alcohol. A higher proportion of year 12 students (95.2%) reported having the opportunity to use alcohol compared to year 9 students (82.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 85.70$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Approximately half of all respondents (53.7%) indicated they had been offered or had the opportunity to use cannabis. Approximately 20% more year 12 students (72.6%) reported being offered or having the opportunity to use cannabis compared to year 9 students (54.8%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 210.69$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Although one quarter of all students (25.3%) reported being offered or having the opportunity to use other illegal drugs only 17.3% of year 9 students indicated they had had the opportunity to use other illegal drugs compared to 40.6% of year 12 students (%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 169.73$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 15 also shows that those who had never used cannabis were far less likely than those who had ever used cannabis to report being offered or having the opportunity to use alcohol ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 169.55$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ), cannabis ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 1147.61$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ), and other illicit drugs ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 430.35$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). While only 15.8% of those who had not used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had an opportunity to use other illegal drugs, 52.6% of those who had used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had such an opportunity ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 335.041$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 15: Opportunity to use alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs

	Alcohol				Cannabis				Other illegal drugs			
	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.
	%	%	%		%	%	%		%	%	%	
<b>Year 9</b>	82.3	16.5	1.2	.000	43.3	54.8	1.9	.000	17.3	79.8	2.9	.000
<b>Year 12</b>	95.2	4.4	0.4		72.6	26.1	1.3		40.6	56.5	3.0	
<b>Never tried</b>	80.5	18.2	1.3	.000	28.3	69.2	2.5	.000	12.1	84.8	2.6	.000
<b>Ever tried</b>	98.7	1.1	0.2		98.1	1.6	0.3		49.8	47.6	2.6	
<b>Total</b>	86.4	11.8	0.9		53.7	43.3	1.7		25.3	68.5	2.8	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses with unsure responses treated as missing values*

### Frequency of drug use

Table 16 reports the frequency of alcohol use for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample over their lifetime, last 12 months, last 4 weeks and last month. Although the majority of students (86.0%) indicated that they have used alcohol in their lifetime, a higher proportion of year 9 students (17.9%) have never used alcohol in their lifetime, compared to year 12 students (7.5%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 194.53$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Year 9 students who have used alcohol, responded quite evenly across all the frequency of use categories however, 31 times or more was the most commonly selected category by year 12 students (41.3%) who had drunk alcohol in their lifetime. In the last 12 months again more year 9 students indicated they had not used alcohol (26.0%) compared to year 12 students (11.6%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 77.13$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The frequency of use category that attracted the most responses from year 9 students (27.7%) was one to two times whereas year 12 students most commonly selected eleven to 30 times (24.7%). More than half of year 9 students (51.4%) indicated they had not used alcohol in the last 4 weeks compared to 28.7% of year 12 students. Approximately 20% more year 9 students (51.4%) reported not drinking alcohol in the last 4 weeks compared to year 12 students (28.7%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 127.75$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). One to two times was the frequency of use category most commonly selected by year 12 students (31.7%). Although the majority of both year 9 students (70.6%) and year 12 students (52.7%) indicated they had not drunk alcohol in the last week, the difference between the years was significant ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 83.60$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 17 reports the frequency of cannabis use for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample over their lifetime, last 12 months, last 4 weeks and last month. Although the majority of respondents (61.5%) indicated that they have never used cannabis in their lifetime, a higher proportion of year 12 students (51.0%) have used cannabis compared to year 9 students (29.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 120.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For those year 12 students who have used cannabis, frequency of use was quite evenly spread across the categories with 13.8% indicating that they had used 31 times or more. The most commonly selected category for year 9 students was one to two times (8.6%) however, 7.2% indicated they had used 31 times or more. A larger proportion of year 12 students (39.5%) indicated they had used cannabis in the last 12 months than year 9 students (24.5%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 65.35$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The frequency of use category most commonly selected by both these groups of students was one to two times. A higher proportion of year 12 students (21.2%) reported that they had used cannabis in the last 4 weeks compared to year 9 students (16.5%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 8.69$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Again the frequency of use category most commonly selected by both these groups of students was one to two times. The majority of students (87.7%) indicated that they had not used cannabis in the last week. There was little difference between year 12 students (12.5%) who reported they had used in the last week and year 9 students (10.6%). The frequency of use category most commonly selected by those who had used was one to two times.

Table 18 reports the frequency of other illegal drug use for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample over their lifetime, last 12 months, last 4 weeks and last month. Although the majority of respondents reported never having used other illegal drugs in their lifetime, a higher proportion of year 12 students (19.2%) indicated they had used other illegal drugs compared to year 9 students (8.7%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 59.76$ ,  $df$

= 1,  $p < .05$ ). Majority of these students in both years indicated that they had used one to two times. More year 12 students (14.1%) also reported using other illegal drugs in the last 12 months than year 9 students (6.5%).

Table 19 reports the frequency of tobacco use for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample over the last 4 weeks and last week. Although the majority of students (81.9%) indicated that they have not used tobacco in the last 4 weeks, a higher proportion of year 12 students (19.8%) reported using tobacco, compared with year 9 students (14.8%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 10.38$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These students in both years were more likely to have used tobacco one to two times. Over 80% of all students (82.8%) reported not using tobacco in the last week. Those who did were most likely to have used one to two times.

Table 16: Frequency of alcohol use by year 9, year 12 and total sample – percent of responses

Alcohol Use	Year	Number of times used alcohol						Sig.
		Never	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-30	31+	
Lifetime use	Year 9 (n=1602)	17.9	17.8	17.0	16.8	14.7	15.7	.000
	Year 12 (n=985)	7.5	7.7	9.1	11.4	22.9	41.3	
	Total (n=2592)	13.8	13.7	13.8	14.5	17.6	25.0	
Use in last 12 months	Year 9 (n=1603)	26.0	27.7	18.8	12.7	9.4	5.4	.000
	Year 12 (n=985)	11.6	13.9	14.6	16.3	24.7	18.9	
	Total (n=2593)	20.2	22.1	16.9	13.8	14.9	10.3	
Use in last 4 weeks	Year 9 (n=1605)	51.4	27.5	12.3	5.5	2.0	1.3	.000
	Year 12 (n=989)	28.7	31.7	20.9	12.9	3.9	1.7	
	Total (n=2599)	42.8	28.7	15.4	8.2	2.7	1.4	
Use in last week	Year 9 (n=1607)	70.6	22.4	4.7	1.3	0.5	0.6	.000
	Year 12 (n=990)	52.7	37.0	7.6	1.6	0.6	0.5	
	Total (n=2604)	62.9	27.6	5.7	1.4	0.5	0.5	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses of used or not during the time period*



Table 17: Frequency of cannabis use by year 9, year 12 and total sample – percent of responses

Cannabis Use	Year	Number of times used cannabis						Sig.
		Never	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-30	31+	
Lifetime use	Year 9 (n=1605)	70.7	8.6	5.3	3.6	4.7	7.2	.000
	Year 12 (n=988)	49.0	11.3	8.5	8.1	9.3	13.8	
	Total (n=2598)	61.5	9.5	6.4	5.2	6.4	9.5	
Use in last 12 months	Year 9 (n=1618)	75.5	8.3	4.8	3.5	3.7	4.3	.000
	Year 12 (n=989)	60.5	13.7	9.4	6.0	4.4	6.1	
	Total (n=2612)	69.1	10.3	6.4	4.4	3.9	4.9	
Use in last 4 weeks	Year 9 (n=1613)	83.5	6.8	4.1	2.0	1.7	1.9	N.S.
	Year 12 (n=987)	78.8	11.4	4.1	1.8	1.9	1.9	
	Total (n=2605)	80.7	8.5	4	1.9	1.7	1.9	
Use in last week	Year 9 (n=1612)	89.4	5.6	2.5	0.8	0.9	0.7	N.S.
	Year 12 (n=992)	87.5	7.6	2.7	0.7	0.9	0.6	
	Total (n=2609)	87.7	6.3	2.6	0.8	0.9	0.7	

N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses of used or not during the time period

**Table 18: Frequency of other illegal drug use by year 9, year 12 and total sample – percent of responses**

Cannabis Use	Year	Number of times used cannabis						Sig.
		Never	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-30	31+	
Lifetime use	Year 9 (n=1602)	91.3	4.6	1.6	.8	.4	1.4	.000
	Year 12 (n=986)	80.8	8.6	4.4	2.0	2.5	1.6	
	Total (n=2588)	85.9	6	2.6	1.3	1.2	1.4	
Use in last 12 months	Year 9 (n=1600)	93.5	3.9	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.5	.000
	Year 12 (n=983)	85.9	8.1	3.1	1.1	0.8	1.0	
	Total (n=2583)	88.9	5.4	1.8	0.8	0.6	0.7	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses of used or not during the time period*

**Table 19: Frequency of tobacco use by year 9, year 12 and total sample – percent of responses**

Tobacco Use	Year	Number of times used tobacco						Sig.
		Never	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-30	31+	
Lifetime use	Year 9 (n=1603)	85.2	5.7	2.2	1.4	2.0	3.6	.001
	Year 12 (n=985)	80.2	7.6	2.2	1.9	1.3	6.7	
	Total (n=2593)	81.9	6.3	2.2	1.6	1.7	4.7	
Use in last 12 months	Year 9 (n=1546)	89.4	4.1	1.4	1.3	1.7	2.2	
	Year 12 (n=927)	85.8	3.9	2.6	1.6	3.2	2.9	
	Total (n=2479)	82.8	3.8	1.7	1.3	2.1	2.3	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses of used or not during the time period*

### Poly drug use

Table 20 reports the proportion year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample that have used alcohol and cannabis, cannabis and other illegal drugs and other illegal drugs and alcohol at the same time in the last 12 months.

Approximately three quarters of all students (75.7%) had not used alcohol and cannabis at the same time. A higher proportion of year 12 students had used cannabis and alcohol at the same time (30.7%) compared to year 9 students (16.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 70.80$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Although only a small percentage (4.9%) of students had used other illicit drugs and cannabis at the same time, more year 12 students (6.6%) had used, compared to year 9 students (3.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 8.66$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Similarly a higher proportion of year 12 students (10.7%) reported using alcohol and other illegal drugs than did year 9 students (5.6%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 21.92$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Unsurprisingly, comparisons between those who had ever or never used cannabis were significant on each of these variables.

**Table 20: Poly drug use in last 12 months by year 9, year 12 and total sample – percent of responses**

	Alcohol and cannabis				Cannabis and other illegal drugs				Alcohol and other illegal drugs			
	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.	Yes	No	Unsure	Sig.
	%	%	%		%	%	%		%	%	%	
<b>Year 9 (n = 1636)</b>	16.3	80.7	3.0	.000	3.9	93.1	3.0	.003	5.6	91.1	3.2	
<b>Year 12 (n = 997)</b>	30.7	67.6	1.7		6.6	91.3	2.1		10.7	86.4	2.8	
<b>Never tried (1622)</b>	2.3	96.2	1.5	.000	1.2	97.5	1.2	.000	2.2	96.0	1.7	.000
<b>Ever tried (n = 953)</b>	54.1	41.8	4.0		11.3	83.8	4.9		16.7	78.2	5.2	
<b>Total (n = 2638)</b>	21.8	75.7	2.5		4.9	92.4	2.7		7.6	89.3	3.1	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{continuity}$  for dichotomised responses with unsure responses treated as missing values*

## HARMS AND RISKS

This section of the questionnaire comprised the following:

- Three multiple response questions pertaining to activities undertaken, problems experienced and health related consequences resulting from alcohol use, cannabis use and a combination of alcohol and cannabis use at the same time; and
- One question pertaining to number of times students had been a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol, cannabis or a combination of the two.

### Drug-related risky activities

Table 21 reports responses from the total sample, year 9 students and year 12 students to the following question: *In the last 12 months which of the following activities did you undertake while affected by cannabis or alcohol alone or in combination?* Respondents could give more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified activity to 9, the least commonly identified activity.

A larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (34.0%) in the last 12 months said they had undertaken any of the risky activities while affected by those drugs compared to those who had used alcohol alone (26.7%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 14.484$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or cannabis alone (21.4%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 47.993$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 21 shows that rankings of risky behaviours experienced across the drug classes and years were fairly similar but there are a couple of exceptions worthy of mention. Among year 12 students, more reported driving a car while affected by cannabis alone (8.9%) than alcohol alone (5.6%), or alcohol and cannabis in combination (6.1%).

The most commonly identified activity undertaken when affected by alcohol was, *Verbally abused someone* (16.3%) with more year 12 students (22.7%) reporting this than year 9 students (11.4%). This activity was also the most commonly identified for each of the three drug classes. *Created a public disturbance* was the second most common risky behaviour noted for alcohol alone (9.7%) and alcohol and cannabis in combination (16.3%), however, for cannabis alone it was ranked seven (4.1%). Rankings for *Caused damage to property* (26.3%) showed a similar pattern.

**Table 21: Risky activities undertaken in last 12 months when affected by alcohol, cannabis or a combination of the two – Percent of responses and Rank**

Risky Activity	Alcohol only			Cannabis only			Alcohol and Cannabis		
	Total (n=1883)	Yr 9 (n=1076)	Yr 12 (n=805)	Total (n=509)	Yr 9 (n=272)	Yr 12 (n=235)	Total (n=356)	Yr 9 (n=160)	Yr 12 (n=196)
Verbally abused someone	16.3 (2)	11.4 (2)	22.7 (2)	8.4 (2)	10.3 (2)	6.0 (3)	22.2 (2)	24.4 (2)	20.4 (2)
Created a public disturbance	9.7 (3)	6.6 (4)	13.9 (3)	4.1 (7)	5.1 (6)	3.0 (7)	16.3 (3)	16.9 (3)	15.8 (3)
Caused damage to property	9.5 (4)	7.3 (3)	12.3 (4)	4.9 (6)	4.4 (7)	5.5 (4)	14.9 (4)	13.8 (5)	15.8 (3)
Physically abused someone	6.4 (5)	5.2 (5)	8.1 (5)	6.1 (4)	8.8 (3)	3.0 (7)	9.0 (6)	9.4 (8)	8.7 (5)
Drove a car	3.8 (9)	2.5 (9)	5.6 (9)	7.9 (3)	7.0 (5)	8.9 (2)	6.5 (9)	6.9 (9)	6.1 (7)
Had unprotected sex	5.0 (6)	3.5 (8)	7.0 (6)	3.1 (8)	2.9 (8)	3.4 (6)	8.4 (7)	11.9 (6)	5.6 (8)
Had sex that you later regretted	4.8 (8)	3.7 (7)	6.1 (8)	2.0 (9)	1.5 (9)	2.6 (9)	7.3 (8)	11.3 (7)	4.1 (9)
Stole property	5.0 (6)	3.8 (6)	6.6 (7)	5.9 (5)	7.4 (4)	4.3 (5)	11.2 (5)	15.0 (4)	8.2 (6)
None of the above	73.3 (1)	78.9 (1)	65.8 (1)	78.6 (1)	75.0 (1)	83.0 (1)	64.0 (1)	61.9 (1)	65.8 (1)

## Social Problems Experienced

Table 22 reports responses to the following question: ‘In the last 12 months which of the following problems have you experienced due to your use of cannabis or alcohol alone or in combination?’ for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students. Respondents could give more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified activity to 9, the least commonly identified activity.

A larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (29.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 39.57$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or cannabis alone (27.9%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 20.224$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ) in the last 12 months said they had experienced any of the social problems over that period compared to those who had used alcohol alone (23.4%).

Table 22 shows that rankings of social problems experienced across the drug classes and years were fairly similar but there were two exceptions worthy of mention. *School work suffering* the most frequently mentioned problem for those using cannabis alone (12.8%) over the last 12 months but was the 6<sup>th</sup> most common problem mentioned by students using alcohol alone (5.9%), or alcohol and cannabis in combination (8.1%). Similarly *been in trouble with school principal or teacher* was rated 9<sup>th</sup> by students using alcohol alone (3.3%), or alcohol and cannabis in combination (2.6%), but was ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> most frequently mentioned problem for those using cannabis alone (6.5%) over the last 12 months. One wonders whether these two differences in cannabis only related problems are associated with cannabis use occurring before or during school, because it would seem less likely that alcohol would be used alone, or in combination with cannabis in these situations.

**Table 22: Social problems in last 12 months when affected by alcohol, cannabis or a combination of the two – Percent of responses and Rank**

Social Problems	Alcohol only			Cannabis only			Alcohol and Cannabis		
	Total (n=1867)	Yr 9 (n=1064)	Yr 12 (n=801)	Total (n=556)	Yr 9 (n=310)	Yr 12 (n=244)	Total (n=344)	Yr 9 (n=155)	Yr 12 (n=189)
<b>Had a disagreement or fight with friends</b>	10.0 (2)	6.6 (3)	14.5 (2)	6.3 (5)	10.0 (4)	1.6 (8)	13.4 (2)	12.9 (2)	13.8 (2)
<b>Been trouble with parents</b>	8.6 (3)	7.2 (2)	10.2 (3)	10.3 (3)	12.3 (3)	7.8 (3)	9.6 (4)	11.6 (3)	7.9 (5)
<b>Had a disagreement or fight with boyfriend/girlfriend</b>	6.9 (4)	4.5 (5)	10.1 (4)	5.8 (7)	5.8 (7)	5.3 (4)	8.7 (5)	9.0 (5)	8.5 (4)
<b>Been verbally abused</b>	6.3 (5)	3.9 (6)	9.5 (5)	3.4 (8)	4.2 (8)	2.5 (6)	5.8 (8)	8.4 (6)	11.6 (3)
<b>School work has suffered</b>	5.9 (6)	4.7 (4)	7.5 (6)	12.8 (2)	14.2 (2)	10.7 (2)	8.1 (6)	8.4 (6)	7.9 (5)
<b>Been physically abused</b>	2.8 (8)	2.3 (8)	3.4 (8)	2.7 (9)	3.9 (9)	1.2 (9)	10.2 (3)	6.5 (8)	5.3 (7)
<b>Been in trouble with the police</b>	3.3 (7)	2.8 (7)	3.9 (7)	5.9 (6)	7.4 (6)	4.1 (5)	7.0 (7)	9.7 (4)	4.8 (8)
<b>Been in trouble with school principal or teacher</b>	1.5 (9)	1.7 (9)	1.2 (9)	6.5 (4)	9.7 (5)	2.5 (6)	2.6 (9)	4.5 (9)	1.1 (9)
<b>None of the above</b>	76.6 (1)	81.7 (1)	70.0 (1)	72.1 (1)	65.2 (1)	81.1 (1)	70.1 (1)	67.1 (1)	72.5 (1)



## Health Related Problems

Table 23 reports responses to the following question: ‘In the last 12 months which of the following health problems have you experienced due to your use of cannabis or alcohol alone or in combination?’ for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students. Respondents could give more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified activity to 13, the least commonly identified activity.

There was a significantly larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (45.5%) in the last 12 months said they had experienced any of the health problems over that period compared to those who had used alcohol alone (39.0%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 6.056$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .014$ ) but not those who had used or cannabis alone (41.8%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non par}} = 1.706$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .191$ ).

With regards to the alcohol only, year 12 students who had used alcohol in the last 12 months were significantly more likely to report health problems with the use of alcohol on it’s own, than their year 9 counterparts ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 61.27$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). There were no differences between year 9 and year 12 respondents with regards to whether health problems were experienced due to the use of cannabis on its own in the past 12 months ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 1.41$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .202$ ). Similarly there were no differences between year 9 and year 12 respondents with regards to whether health problems were experienced due to cannabis and alcohol use together in the past 12 months ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.39$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .844$ ).

*Hangovers* were the most common problem identified by respondents of both years with regards to the use of alcohol on its own, whereas *spinning out or dizziness* and *difficulty breathing* were most often noted with regards to the use of cannabis on it’s own, the former, largely attributable to the higher proportion of years 9 students reporting this health problem (19.9%). *Spinning out or dizziness* was the most common (22.7%) problem experienced by those who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination over the last 12 months.

**Table 23: Health problems in last 12 months when affected by alcohol, cannabis or a combination of the two – Percent of responses and Rank**

Health Problem	Alcohol only			Cannabis only			Alcohol and Cannabis		
	Total (n=1911)	Yr 9 (n=1090)	Yr 12 (n=818)	Total (n=548)	Yr 9 (n=301)	Yr 12 (n=245)	Total (n=343)	Yr 9 (n=157)	Yr 12 (n=186)
Hangover	26.8 (2)	20.9 (2)	34.6 (2)	2.4 (12)	2.7 (13)	2.0 (11)	8.7 (8)	7.6 (9)	9.7 (8)
Vomiting	15.4 (3)	9.0 (4)	24.0 (3)	2.4 (12)	3.0 (12)	1.6 (12)	8.5 (10)	6.4 (10)	10.2 (7)
Spinning out or dizziness	14.4 (4)	11.2 (3)	18.8 (4)	15.1 (2)	19.9 (2)	9.4 (7)	22.7 (2)	23.6 (2)	22.0 (2)
Passing out	10.7 (5)	6.8 (5)	16.0 (5)	6.2 (9)	7.6 (8)	4.5 (9)	13.4 (4)	15.3 (3)	11.8 (6)
Memory loss	10.0 (6)	6.5 (6)	14.7 (6)	13.1 (6)	13.3 (5)	12.7 (6)	15.7 (3)	14.6 (4)	16.7 (3)
Physical co-ordination was affected	8.1 (7)	4.4 (9)	13.1 (7)	6.9 (8)	7.3 (9)	6.5 (8)	11.7 (6)	9.6 (8)	13.4 (5)
Decreased ability to concentrate	6.4 (8)	4.6 (7)	8.8 (8)	14.6 (4)	15.6 (4)	13.1 (4)	13.4 (4)	12.7 (5)	14.0 (4)
Felt confused	5.4 (9)	4.5 (8)	6.7 (9)	13.5 (5)	13.3 (5)	13.5 (3)	10.5 (7)	12.1 (6)	9.1 (9)

**Table 23 cont: Health problems in last 12 months when affected by alcohol, cannabis or a combination of the two – Percent of responses and Rank**

Health problem	Alcohol only			Cannabis only			Alcohol and Cannabis		
	Total (n=1911)	Yr 9 (n=1090)	Yr 12 (n=818)	Total (n=299)	Yr 9 (n=301)	Yr 12 (n=245)	Total (n=343)	Yr 9 (n=157)	Yr 12 (n=186)
Felt anxious	3.5 (10)	3.3 (10)	3.8 (10)	12.2 (7)	9.6 (7)	15.5 (2)	8.7 (8)	10.2 (7)	7.5 (10)
Difficulty breathing after exercise	2.4 (11)	2.0 (11)	2.9 (11)	15.1 (2)	16.6 (3)	13.1 (4)	6.4 (11)	5.7 (12)	7.0 (11)
Other health effects	2.1 (12)	1.8 (12)	2.4 (12)	2.6 (11)	3.3 (11)	1.6 (12)	5.5 (12)	5.7 (12)	5.4 (12)
Asthma attacks	1.2 (13)	1.1 (13)	1.3 (13)	4.4 (10)	5.3 (10)	2.9 (10)	3.2 (13)	3.8 (13)	2.7 (13)
None of the above	61.0 (1)	68.6 (1)	50.9 (1)	58.2 (1)	55.8 (1)	61.2 (1)	54.5 (1)	55.4 (1)	53.8 (8)

### Passenger in Car

Table 24 reports the frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample for the following question: In the last 12 months how many times were you a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol or cannabis alone or in combination.

The majority of students reported that they had never been a passenger in a car where the driver had been affected by alcohol only (66.1%), cannabis only (79.3%) or alcohol and cannabis in combination (87.3%). Clearly more students indicated they had been a passenger in a car where the driver had been affected by alcohol (33.9%) than cannabis(20.6%) or a combination of the two (12.6%). Of those who had been in a car where the driver had been affected, the most commonly identified frequency category was 1-2 times in the last 12 months (17.6%, alcohol only; 7.6% cannabis only and 4.6% alcohol and cannabis in combination). A higher proportion of year 12 (24.8%) students reported being a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by cannabis only compared to year 9 students (12.6%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 61.53$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Similarly more year 12 students (14.6%) indicated that they had been a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol and cannabis in combination compared to year 9 students (8.2%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 24.96$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 24: Number of times (%) in the last 12 months been a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol or cannabis alone or in combination.**

Driver affected by:	Year	Number of times in a car where driver affected by alcohol or drugs						Sig.
		Never	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-30	31+	
<b>Alcohol only</b>	Year 9 (n=1582)	69.2	18.2	6.8	2.1	1.1	1.7	N.S.
	Year 12 (n=970)	66.4	18.0	8.4	3.9	1.6	1.6	
	Total (n=2557)	66.1	17.6	7.1	3.1	1.3	1.7	
<b>Cannabis only</b>	Year 9 (n=1554)	87.4	5.5	2.3	1.7	1.4	1.7	.000
	Year 12 (n=970)	75.2	11.9	5.7	2.6	1.4	1.7	
	Total (n=2529)	79.3	7.6	3.4	2.0	1.5	2.0	
<b>Alcohol and Cannabis</b>	Year 9 (n=1636)	91.8	3.3	1.4	1.7	0.8	1.3	.000
	Year 12 (n=960)	85.4	7.2	3.4	1.3	0.8	1.9	
	Total (n=2518)	87.3	4.6	2.0	1.4	0.8	1.3	

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}}$  for dichotomised responses of having been in a passenger in a car where the driver was affected versus not.*

## LIFETIME CANNABIS USE AND NONUSE

Respondents were asked whether they had ever tried cannabis. Some 1647 (63.3%) said that they had not, 953 (36.7%) said that they had, and there were 38 missing cases. Some 28.5% of year 9 students said that they had tried cannabis compared to 49.9% of year 12 students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 120.072$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The proportion of year 9 students who had ever tried cannabis was not significantly different to the 28% of West Australian school students of age 14 (year 9) who had ever used the drug (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non-par}} = 0.207$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .649$ ). The proportion of year 12 students who had ever tried cannabis was not significantly different to the 53% of Western Australian school students of age 17 (year 12) who had ever used the drug (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004) ( $\chi^2_{\text{non-par}} = 3.680$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .055$ ).

Those who said that they had not used the drug were then asked questions regarding:

- Their intent to use or not use and;
- The reasons why these students did not use cannabis.

### Intent to Use

Table 25 reports the frequency of responses to the question: *Do you think you will ever try cannabis?* For those who had never tried cannabis.

**Table 25: Intent to use cannabis among those who had never used the drug - Percent of responses**

Intent to use	Percent of Respondents			Sig.
	All (n=1617)	Yr 9 (n=1137)	Yr 12 (n=480)	
Yes, will try	11.0	11.8	9.2	.005
No, will never try	63.6	61.1	69.6	
unsure	25.4	27.1	21.3	

*N.B. Significance is reported for Pearson  $X^2$*

Although the majority (63.6%) of students who had never tried cannabis indicated that they would not try it in the future, a higher proportion of year 9 students (11.8%) reported that they would try cannabis, compared to year 12 students (9.2%) (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 10.43$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

### Reasons For Not Using Cannabis (multiple response statement)

Table 25 reports responses to the following question: What best describes your reasons for not using cannabis, for the total sample, year 9 students, and year 12 students. Respondents could give more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified reason to 14, the least commonly identified reason.

**Table 25: Reasons for not using cannabis among those who had never used the drug - Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=1589)	Yr 9 (n=1104)	Yr 12 (n=482)
Don't need it	76.2 (1)	77.3 (1)	73.9 (1)
Can have a good time without using	66.6 (2)	67.9 (2)	63.5 (2)
Concerned about it might affect my health	63.9 (3)	67.5 (3)	55.4 (3)
It's illegal	60.0 (4)	66.5 (4)	45.0 (4)
My parents don't want me to use it	43.4 (5)	49.5 (5)	29.0 (5)
Concerned about becoming addicted to it	38.5 (6)	44.0 (6)	25.7 (7)
Concerned that parents might find out	35.0 (7)	39.5 (7)	24.7 (8)
Concerned about being caught by police	29.6 (8)	34.1 (8)	19.3 (12)
My friends don't use it	24.9 (9)	26.9 (9)	20.3 (10)
Am concerned about moving on to more dangerous drugs	23.3 (10)	26.7 (10)	21.8 (9)
Prefer to use alcohol	22.8 (11)	20.0 (12)	29.0 (5)
Can't afford it	13.3 (13)	13.0 (14)	13.9 (13)
Can't get it	13.2 (14)	14.9 (13)	9.1 (14)
Prefer to use other illegal drugs	2.1 (15)	2.3 (15)	1.7 (15)
Other	21.4 (12)	21.8 (11)	20.3 (10)

Some 76.2% of respondents who had never used cannabis said that they did not use it because they *don't need it*. It was the most commonly identified response by both year 9 and year 12 students. The next most commonly identified reasons were: *Can have a*

*good time without it* (66.6%); *Concerned about how it might affect my health* (63.9%); and *It's illegal* (60.0%). Year 12 students identified *Prefer to use alcohol*, as their fifth most common reason (29.0%) whereas year 9 students ranked this reason twelfth (20.0%). Concern about being caught by police was ranked eighth by students as a whole (29.6%) and year 9 students (26.9%), but only twelfth (19.3%) by year 12 students. The other reasons were ranked similarly by both years however it appears that a higher proportion of year 9 students identified many of the reasons. The least common reasons why these students did not use cannabis were: *Prefer to use other illegal drugs*; *can't get it*; and *can't afford it*.

## CANNABIS USERS

This section of the questionnaire was only for those students who had used cannabis and comprised the following:

- One question pertaining age of first use;
- Two questions pertaining to mode of use;
- Two question pertaining to context of use;
- Three question pertaining to availability of cannabis;
- One question pertaining to availability of other drugs when obtaining cannabis;
- One question pertaining to supplying cannabis;
- One question pertaining to reasons for using cannabis;
- One question pertaining to current use and;
- One question pertaining to reasons for no longer using cannabis.

## AGE OF FIRST USE

Table 26 reports the frequency of first cannabis use for the total sample, year 9 students and year 12 students. Due to the censoring effect of age, it makes little sense to describe the age of first use of the sample as a whole. Rather, Table 26 shows age of first use by year. This comparison was, as expected, highly significant (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 283.86$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

The mean age of commencing cannabis use for year 9 students who had tried the drug was 12.2 years (range 9 to 15 years). The mean age of commencing cannabis use for year 12 students who had tried the drug was 13.9 years (range 9 to 18 years). This difference was significant ( $t = -16.37$ ,  $df = 942$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



**Table 26: Age of first use by year – percent of respondents**

Age of first use in years	All (n=931)		Yr 9 (n= 450)		Yr 12 (n= 481)	
	%	Cum.%	%	Cum.%	%	Cum.%
9	4.5	4.5	6.2	6.2	2.9	2.9
10	3.5	8.0	6.2	12.4	1.0	3.9
11	6.6	14.6	10.0	22.4	3.3	7.2
12	19.9	34.5	28.0	50.4	12.3	19.5
13	29.3	63.8	39.1	89.5	20.2	39.7
14	16.8	80.6	10.0	99.5	23.1	62.8
15	9.6	90.2	0.2	99.7	18.3	81.1
16	7.9	98.1	0.0	99.7	15.4	96.5
17	1.7	99.8	0.0	99.7	3.3	99.8
18	0.2	100.0	0.0	99.7	0.2	100.0

## METHOD OF CANNABIS USE

Table 27 reports frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample regarding the following question: *How do you most commonly use cannabis?* Overall there was no significant difference between year 9 and 12 students regarding their method of use (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 8.398$ ,  $df = 5$ , N.S.). However, dichotomous comparison by year of whether or not they mainly used a bong was significant ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 5.55$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .018$ ), while all other comparisons were not.

**Table 27: Main method of cannabis use by year**

Method of use	All (n=741)	Yr 9 (n=389)	Yr 12 (n=352)	Sig.
Smoke it in joints	16.7	17.9	15.7	N.S.
Smoke it from a bong	51.3	46.6	55.5	0.18
Smoke it from a pipe	14.4	14.8	14.1	N.S.
Eat it	1.5	1.4	1.5	N.S.
Smoke it from a 'bucket' bong	12.4	14.5	10.5	N.S.
Other	3.6	4.8	2.6	N.S.

*N.B. Significance test is  $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}}$  for dichotomised responses.*

Students who had used cannabis were asked *when they usually smoked cannabis did [they] mix it with tobacco?* Some 27.6% of the 910 who responded said that they did and 72.4% said they did not. There was no significant difference between year 9 and year 12 students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 0.328$ ,  $df = 1$ , N.S.).

## CONTEXT OF USE

Table 28 reports responses to the following question: *Where do you use cannabis?* for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified place to 9, the least commonly identified place. Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 28: Where cannabis is used by year – Percent of respondents and rank**

Place	All (n=926)	Year 9 (n=448)	Year 12 (n=478)
Friends house	68.6 (1)	60.3 (1)	76.4 (1)
Parties	61.8 (2)	52.5 (2)	70.5 (2)
Public places /parks/beaches	44.0 (3)	46.4 (3)	41.6 (3)
Own home	32.3 (4)	27.9 (4)	36.4 (4)
In cars	20.6 (5)	16.3 (7)	24.7 (5)
School	16.0 (7)	16.5 (6)	15.5 (6)
Concerts / raves	12.0 (8)	11.8 (8)	12.1 (8)
Clubs and pubs	6.8 (9)	6.0 (9)	7.5 (9)
Other	20.2 (6)	27.7 (5)	13.2 (7)

The most commonly identified place of use was *friend's house*, identified by 68.6% of the group as a whole and by 76.4% of year 12 students and 80.3% of year 9 students. The next most common place reported was *parties* and again a higher proportion of year 12 students (70.5%) reported this than year 9 students (52.5%). The least commonly identified places where young people used cannabis were: *Clubs and pubs*; and *concerts or raves*.

Table 29 reports the frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample for the question: *Who do you usually use cannabis with?* There was a significant difference between year 9 and year 12 students with regards to the people that they usually use cannabis with (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 23.43$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This is

presented in Table 28. Although the majority of students (80.4%) reported usually using cannabis with close friends, a higher proportion of year 12 students (84.1%) indicated they used with close friends compared with 76.7% of year 9 students.

**Table 29: Who usually use cannabis with by year – Percent of respondents**

Who with	All (n=767)	Yr 9 (n=378)	Yr 12 (n=389)
On my own	2.2	2.9	1.5
People I don't know well	1.4	1.6	1.3
Parent	1.2	2.1	0.3
Close friends	80.4	76.7	84.1
Sibling	3.8	6.1	1.5
Other relative	1.6	2.4	0.8
Other	9.4	8.2	10.5

### CANNABIS AVAILABILITY

Table 30 reports the frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample for the following question: *How did you first obtain cannabis?* There was a significant difference between year 9 and year 12 students (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 26.40$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

**Table 30: How first obtained cannabis by year – Percent of respondents**

Source	All (n=844)	Yr 9 (n=412)	Yr 12 (n=432)
Grew it	2.5	4.4	0.7
Bought it from dealer/supplier	9.1	10.2	8.1
Given it by someone other than family or friend	14.7	14.6	14.8
Bought it from friend/family	7.3	6.6	8.1
Given it by friend/family	62.0	57.5	66.2
Other	4.4	6.8	2.1

Although the majority of students (62.0%) reported first obtaining cannabis by it being given to them from family or friends, a higher proportion of year 12 students (66.2%) indicated cannabis was given to them by family or friends on the first occasion compared with 57.5% of year 9 students ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 9.90$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

**Table 31: How usually obtain cannabis now by year – Percent of respondents**

Source	All (n=764)	Yr 9 (n=382)	Yr 12 (n=382)
Grow it	3.8	5.8	1.8
Buy it from dealer/supplier	14.7	15.7	13.6
Given it by someone other than family or friend	7.1	8.9	5.2
Buy it from friend/family	12.8	10.2	15.4
Given it by friend/family	38.1	35.3	40.8
Other	23.6	24.1	23.0

There was a significant difference between the way year 9 and year 12 students *usually obtain cannabis now* (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 18.11$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .003$ ). This data is presented in Table 31. A higher proportion of year 12 students (40.8%) indicated that they obtained cannabis now by it being given to them by friends or family compared to year 9 students (35.3%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 8.38$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .004$ ). Some 14.7% of all students reported they obtained cannabis now by buying from a dealer.

Table 32 reports the frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample for the following question: How easy is it to obtain cannabis now?

**Table 32: Ease of obtaining cannabis now – Percent of respondents**

Ease of obtaining	All (n=916)	Yr 9 (n=439)	Yr 12 (n=477)
Very easy	49.3	45.6	52.8
Easy	36.0	36.9	35.2
Difficult	3.3	5.2	1.5
Very difficult	1.2	2.3	0.2
Unsure	10.2	10.0	10.3

There was a significant difference between year 9 and year 12 students regarding the *ease of obtaining cannabis now* (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 22.34$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ). A higher proportion of year 12 students (88.0%) indicated it was easy or very easy to obtain cannabis now compared to year 9 students (82.5%) ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 16.91$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The majority of these students in both years reported it was very easy to obtain cannabis.

## OTHER DRUGS OFFERED WHILE OBTAINING CANNABIS

Table 33 reports responses to the following question: *Which of the following drugs have you ever been offered when obtaining cannabis*, for the total sample, year 9 students, and year 12 students. Respondents could give more than one response.

**Table 33: Ease of obtaining cannabis now – Percent of respondents**

Other drugs offered when obtaining cannabis	All (n=860)	Yr 9 (n=423)	Yr 12 (n=437)
Alcohol	54.9	59.8	50.1
Amphetamines	35.2	35.9	34.6
Ecstasy	22.6	18.2	26.8
LSD	22.7	18.3	13.7
Cocaine	11.9	15.1	8.7
Mushrooms	11.3	12.3	10.3
Anti-depressants	9.3	9.2	9.4
Heroin	8.3	11.8	4.8
Painkillers /analgesics	7.7	9.2	6.2
Tranquilizers / sleeping pills / benzos	7.3	7.3	7.3
Other	12.9	16.1	9.8
Not offered any other drugs	29.5	24.6	34.3

The majority of students (54.9%) reported being offered alcohol when obtaining cannabis. Whereas 59.6% of year 9 students indicated they had been offered alcohol when obtaining cannabis only 49.9% of year 12 students did. Both years reported that the next two most commonly offered drugs when obtaining cannabis were amphetamines and ecstasy. Approximately one third of year 12 students (34.4%) reported not being offered any other drugs when obtaining cannabis compared to one quarter of year 9 students (24.4%). One has to question whether some of the year 9 responses involved over-reporting. It is hard to imagine that 15.1% of year 9 students were offered cocaine, compared to 8.7% of year 12 students, particularly given that this drug is not widely available in WA. It is possible however, that year 9 students may have been offered 'cocaine' although what they were given, if this happened was not cocaine, but some substitute substance such as amphetamine powder.

## SUPPLYING CANNABIS

Table 34 reports responses for the total sample, year 9 students, and year 12 students to the following question: *With regard to supplying cannabis which of the following applies to you?* Respondents could give more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified response to 5, the least commonly identified response.

**Table 34: Self description of own involvement in cannabis supply – Percent of respondents and rank**

<b>Involvement in cannabis supply</b>	<b>All (n= 847)</b>	<b>Year 9 (n=408)</b>	<b>Year 12 (n=439)</b>
I have never supplied cannabis	58.0 (1)	57.8 (1)	58.1 (1)
I have given it to friends/family	29.3 (2)	30.4 (2)	28.2 (2)
I have given it to others	24.6 (3)	25.5 (3)	23.7 (3)
I have sold to others	17.9 (4)	20.1 (4)	15.9 (4)
I have sold to friends/family	14.0 (5)	15.4 (5)	12.8 (5)

The majority (58.0%) of students who had ever used cannabis reported that they have never supplied cannabis. Table 33 shows that the second most commonly identified response by both year 9 students (30.4%) and year 12 students (28.2%) was, *I have given it to friends /family*. Some 14.0% said that they had *sold cannabis to friends and family* and 17.9% said they had *sold to others*.

## REASONS FOR USING CANNABIS

Table 35 reports responses for all those who had ever used cannabis, year 9 and year 12 students who had ever used the drug to the following question: *What best describes your reasons for using cannabis?* Respondents could choose more than one response. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified response to 14, the least commonly identified response. The majority of students (55.6%) most commonly identified using cannabis *for fun/ to have a good time. Makes me feel good* and *Experimenting / curiosity* were the next most commonly identified reasons by both years. *Pressure from friends*, was the least commonly identified reason for both years.

**Table 35: Respondents' reasons for using cannabis – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=886)	Yr 9 (n=427)	Yr 12 (n=459)
	%	%	%
For fun / to have a good time	55.6 (1)	58.8 (1)	52.7 (1)
Makes me feel good	48.1 (2)	53.6 (2)	42.9 (3)
Experimenting / curiosity	42.7 (3)	41.0 (3)	44.2 (2)
Relieves stress	27.4 (4)	28.8 (5)	26.1 (4)
It's less dangerous than other drugs	26.5 (5)	30.9 (4)	22.4 (5)
My friends use it	21.4 (6)	25.1 (6)	18.1 (7)
It's easy to get	21.4 (6)	21.8 (7)	21.1 (6)
Pain relief	15.5 (9)	20.8 (9)	10.5 (9)
It's cheap	11.7 (10)	13.6 (11)	10.0 (10)
To be 'cool'	10.0 (11)	15.5 (10)	5.0 (13)
It's safe	9.4 (12)	10.3 (13)	8.5 (11)
Everyone uses it	8.6 (13)	11.7 (12)	5.7 (12)
Pressure from friends	8.0 (14)	11.2 (14)	5.0 (13)
Other	18.2 (8)	21.3 (8)	15.3 (8)

## CURRENT CANNABIS USERS

Table 36 reports the frequencies for year 9 students, year 12 students and the total sample in response to the following question: Do you still use cannabis?

**Table 36: Still use cannabis - Percent of respondents**

Still use cannabis	Percent of Respondents			Sig.
	All (n=891)	Yr 9 (n=427)	Yr 12 (n=464)	
Yes	47.9	53.6	42.7	.001
No	52.1	46.4	57.3	

*N.B. Significance is reported for Chi Square with a continuity correction.*

Just under half (47.9%) of students who had ever used cannabis indicated that they still used the drug. There was a significant difference between years with 53.6% of year 9 students who had ever used the drug compared to 42.7% of year 12 students saying they still used cannabis ( $\chi^2_{\text{continuity}} = 10.26$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

## STUDENTS WHO NO LONGER USE CANNABIS (multiple response)

Respondents who said that they no longer used cannabis were asked the following question: *If you no longer use cannabis what best describes your reasons for not using it?* Respondents could give more than one response. Table 37 reports responses for all those who had ever used cannabis, year 9 and year 12 students who had ever used the drug. Responses have been ranked from 1, the most commonly identified response to 22, the least commonly identified response.



**Table 37: Respondents' reasons for no longer using cannabis – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=470)	Yr 9 (n=204)	Yr 12 (n=266)
	%	%	%
Was only experimenting	51.5 (1)	51.0 (1)	51.9 (1)
Can have a good time without using it	45.1 (2)	38.2 (2)	50.4 (2)
Didn't like the effect	32.1 (3)	25.0 (5)	37.6 (3)
Prefer to use alcohol	32.3 (4)	28.9 (4)	35.0 (4)
It was affecting my health	22.8 (6)	30.4 (3)	16.9 (8)
Concerned about how it might affect my health	20.0 (7)	21.1 (7)	19.2 (7)
Concerned with how it might affect my school work	19.1 (8)	18.1 (8)	19.9 (6)
Was concerned about becoming addicted	14.5 (9)	21.1 (7)	9.4 (10)
Concerned my parents would find out	14.3 (10)	21.1 (7)	9.0 (11)
Can't afford it	14.3 (10)	12.7 (13)	15.4 (9)
Parents don't want me to use	13.6 (12)	20.6 (9)	8.3 (12)
Parents found out	12.3 (13)	17.6 (11)	8.3 (12)
Concerned about being caught by police	10.9 (14)	19.6 (10)	4.1 (15)
Concerned about moving on to more dangerous drugs	9.1 (15)	14.7 (1)	4.9 (14)
Concerned school would find out	8.7 (16)	17.2 (12)	2.3 (1)

**Table 37 cont: Respondents' reasons for no longer using cannabis – Percent of respondents and rank**

Reasons	All (n=470)	Yr 9 (n=204)	Yr 12 (n=266)
	% (rank)	% (rank)	% (rank)
Friends don't use it	7.2 (17)	8.3 (14)	6.4 (13)
Can't get it	4.3 (18)	6.9 (15)	2.3 (17)
Was putting on weight	3.6 (19)	6.9 (15)	1.1 (18)
School found out	2.8 (20)	3.9 (16)	1.9 (5)
Prefer to use other illegal drugs	2.8 (20)	2.0 (17)	3.4 (16)
Was caught by police	1.3 (21)	2.0 (17)	0.8 (19)
Other	23.0 (5)	25.0 (9)	21.4 (5)

The majority of students (51.5%) indicated that they no longer used cannabis because they were *only experimenting*. Both year 9 students (51.0%) and year 12 students (51.9%) identified this as the most common reason for no longer using cannabis. Although both years identified *Can have a good time without using it*, as the second most popular reason approximately 12% more year 12 students (50.4%) selected this reason than did year 9 students (38.2%). The third most common reason for year 9 students (30.4%) was *It was affecting my health*, however only 16.9% (rank 8) of year 12 students selected this reason.

The third most common reason for year 12 students (37.6%) was *didn't like the effect*, with year 9 students identifying it as the fifth most common reason (25.0%). *Prefer to use alcohol* was the fourth most common reason for both year 9 (29.5%) and year 12 (35%) students. Year 9 students appeared more concerned about the following reasons than year 12 students: *Concerned about being caught by police; Parents found out; and concerned school would find out*. Year 12 students however appeared more concerned about, *how it might affect my school work*, than year 9 students. *School found out; Caught by police; and prefer to use other illegal drugs* were the least most common reasons identified by both years.

## IMPACT OF LEGAL PENALTIES

This section of the questionnaire was for all students and comprised the following:

- One question pertaining to civil penalties and cannabis use; and
- One question pertaining to legalisation and cannabis use.

Given the imperfect understanding of the terms prohibition with civil penalties and legalisation the questions explained the terms as ‘civil penalties, like a fine for speeding in a motor vehicle’ and ‘made legal, so using it was no longer an offence of any kind’.

### Civil penalties

Table 38 reports frequencies for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students, those who had never tried cannabis, and those who had ever tried cannabis regarding the following question: *If civil penalties, like a fine for speeding in a motor vehicle, applied to cannabis use would you?*

Overall, 54.6% of students said that they would not try cannabis if civil penalties applied, 9.2% said they would use as much as they do now, 5.5% said they would try it, and 26.8% were unsure. There was a significant difference between years 9 and 12 students (Pearson  $\chi^2= 46.90$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Some 57.4% of year 9 students indicated they would not use cannabis if civil penalties applied compared to 50.0% of year 12 students.

There was a significant difference between students who had never used cannabis and those who had ever used it (Pearson  $\chi^2= 745.09$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Some 70.4% of those who had never used the drug said that they would not try it, compared to 26.3% of those who had used it. Some 4.8% of those who had never used it said that they would try it compared to 6.8% of those who had tried it.

### Legalisation

Table 39 reports frequencies for the total sample, year 9 students, year 12 students, those who had never tried cannabis, and those who had ever tried cannabis regarding the following question: *If cannabis use by adults were made legal, so using it was no longer an offence of any kind, would you?*

Overall, 50.3% of students said that they would not try cannabis if it were legalised 9.2% said they would try it, 10.0% said they would use as much as they do now, 5.5% said they would use it more often, and 24.1% were unsure. There was a significant difference between years 9 and 12 students (Pearson  $\chi^2= 60.78$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Some 52.1% of year 9 students indicated they would not use cannabis if it were legalised compared to 47.4% of year 12 students.

**Table 38: Impact on own cannabis use cannabis if civil penalties, like a fine for speeding in a motor vehicle, applied to cannabis use – Percent of respondents**

	All (n=2547)	Yr 9 (n=1573)	Yr 12 (n=974)	Sig.	Never tried (n=1629)	Ever tried (n=913)	Sig.
Not use it	54.6	57.4	50.0	.000	70.4	26.3	.000
Try it	5.5	5.8	4.9		4.8	6.8	
Use it less often	2.7	2.9	2.5		0.1	7.7	
Use it as often	9.2	6.3	14.0		0.6	24.6	
Use it more often	1.1	1.3	.9		0.3	2.6	
Unsure	26.8	26.3	27.7		23.9	32.0	

*N.B. Significance is reported for Pearson  $X^2$*

**Table 39: Impact on own cannabis use cannabis if cannabis use was made legal – Percent of respondents**

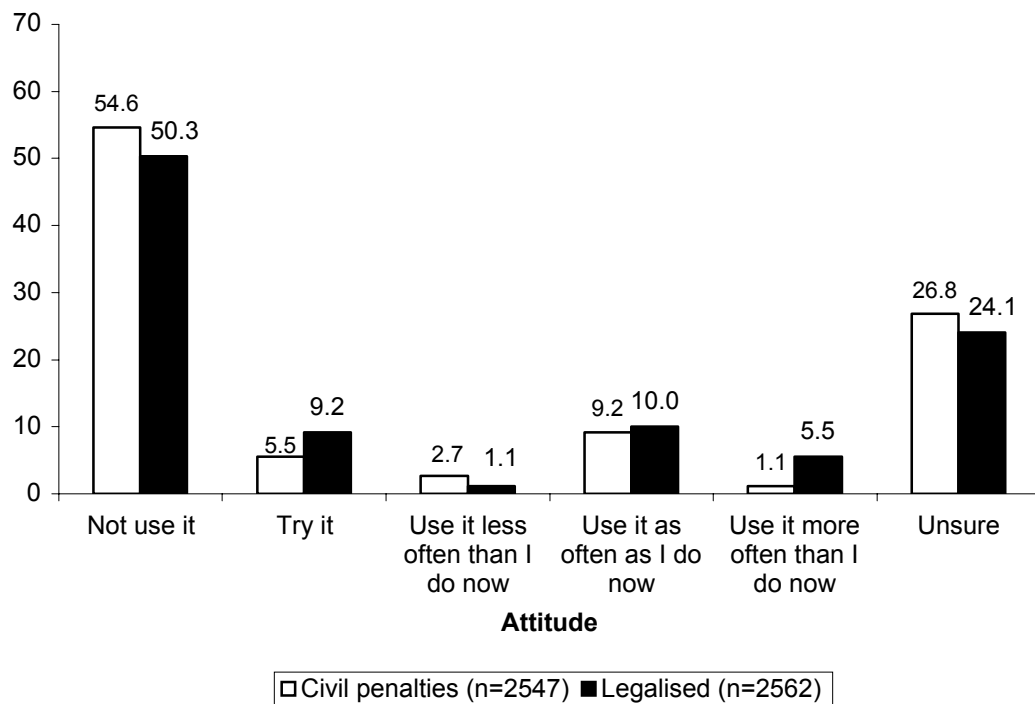
	All (n=2562)	Yr 9 (n=1581)	Yr 12 (n=981)	Sig.	Never tried (n=1634)	Ever tried (n=923)	Sig.
Not use it	50.3	52.1	47.4	.000	65.9	22.9	.000
Try it	9.2	10.1	7.7		11.2	5.7	
Use it less often	1.1	1.1	1.0		0.1	2.8	
Use it as often	10.0	6.6	15.4		0.3	27.1	
Use it more often	5.5	6.5	3.8		0.6	14.2	
Unsure	24.1	14.6	9.4		22.0	27.3	

*N.B. Significance is reported for Pearson  $X^2$*

There was a significant difference between students who had never used cannabis and those who had ever used it (Pearson  $\chi^2= 910.13$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Some 65.9% of those who had never used the drug said that they would not try it, compared to 22.9% of those who had used it. Some 11.2% of those who had never used it said that they would try it compared to 4.7% of those who had tried it. Among those who had never tried 0.6% said that they would use it more often than they did now, while 14.2% of those who had ever used it did so.

### Comparison of expected impact on own cannabis use of civil penalty or legalisation scheme

Figure 23 presents a comparison of expected impact of a civil penalty versus legalisation scheme on own cannabis use. This was significant (Non Par  $\chi^2= 216.38$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Under a civil penalties scheme 4.3% more respondents said they would not use the drug and 3.7% fewer said that they would try it.



**Figure 23: Expected impact on own cannabis use of civil penalty versus legalisation scheme – percent of respondents**

An important comparison is the prediction of cannabis use under prohibition with civil penalties or legalisation for those respondents who had never used the drug. Excluding missing values, under prohibition with civil penalties, 71.3% said they would not use, 4.7% said they would try it, and 24.0% said they were unsure, yet under legalisation 66.7% said they would not use, 11.3% said they would try it, and 22.1% said they were unsure. This difference was significant ( $\chi^2= 1121.053$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ).



## **COMPONENT 2: FOCUS GROUP STUDY OF SCHOOL DRUG EDUCATION TEACHERS FROM GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN WA**

### **METHOD**

The focus groups were conducted in August 2002.

### **SAMPLING**

The selection of teachers for involvement in the focus groups was restricted to Perth, metropolitan, government secondary schools and was by invitation. The Health Education Co-ordinator in every metropolitan government secondary school was sent a letter inviting them or their representative to participate in a focus group discussion. A half-day relief payment was offered to cover the teachers' release from classroom duties to attend the focus group. For teachers to be eligible to participate they had to meet the following criteria:

Current health education teacher; and

Experience in teaching drug education programs.

Teachers from twenty schools responded with two schools offering to send two teachers. The total sample comprised eleven males and thirteen females (n=24) representing a variety of schools reflecting teaching experiences covering a broad socio economic range.

Qualitative research literature indicates that the following issues should be considered in the composition of focus groups:

Focus groups should be conducted until clear patterns emerge and subsequent sessions provide repetition of information gathered in previous sessions (Hawe et al., 1990). Hawe et al., (1990) suggest that four to six focus groups should be sufficient for repetition across focus groups to occur. This study conducted four focus groups. The focus groups provided a representational spread across a range of schools according to an index provided to the researcher by the Education Department of Western, which scores schools on a range of socio-demographic factors.

Focus groups should be made up of homogeneous members (Bernard, 1995; Hawe et al., 1990; Sheldin & Schreiber, 1995). Therefore all focus group participants in this study were government, metropolitan secondary health education teachers, experienced in drug education.

The literature indicates that focus groups should comprise of 6-12 members (Bernard, 1995), a maximum of eight members, with seven members being ideal (Hawe et al., 1990; Sheldin & Schreiber, 1995; Windsor et al., 1994). This study aimed to recruit

seven members per focus group. However, due to organizational issues relating to teacher availability, each group comprised six participants.

Therefore, this study conducted four focus groups comprising six teachers. Each group comprised a mix of male and female participants. Although generalisation of the findings of focus groups is not appropriate, the wide range of schools represented a broad socio economic range therefore increasing the transferability of findings to other similar populations. Although the teachers self selected, the wide variety of schools represented reduced the potential of over emphasising certain issues that may have occurred if the teachers were drawn from only a few schools.

## **INSTRUMENTS USED**

The question and probe schedule (Appendix 5) adopted for the focus groups was subject to expert review from the health and education sectors to assess credibility.

Prior to attending the focus groups, participants were sent a one page summary of the proposed legal changes to inform their consideration of the issues covered in the focus group discussion [See Appendix 6].

The two main elements for ensuring the trustworthiness of focus group data are the skill of the group facilitator and the methods adopted for the analysis of the data (Bernard, 1995; Shedlin & Schreiber, 1995). To increase the quality of the data obtained during focus groups the facilitator should be experienced in conducting focus groups, with knowledge of group processes and the education system (Bernard, 1995; Shedlin & Schreiber, 1995; Windsor et al., 1994). The researcher had experience in all of these considerations. During the focus groups particular attention was taken not to lead the discussion or make judgements about what the participants were saying or doing.

## **ANALYSIS**

The focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and were audio-taped and transcribed to ensure that the richness of the data was retained and accurately presented (Bernard, 1995; Hawe.) The relevant literature suggests that the following format be adopted for the analysis of focus group information to increase accuracy of interpretation (Hawe et al., 1990; Windsor et al., 1994; Shedlin & Schreiber, 1995). For each focus group:

- State the question.
- Develop a matrix of response themes.
- Describe the range of themes.
- Provide direct quotations to illustrate the themes.
- Provide interpretative discussion.



All focus group interviews were transcribed by the researcher and checked against the tapes for accuracy. Each question was analysed individually. For each question, all the teachers' comments from all focus groups were listed separately. Comments that were interpreted to be of a similar nature were identified as a theme. Inherent to qualitative research is the potential for subjective judgement during the interpretation of data. A conscious effort was made by the researcher to bracket out any preconceptions that may have biased the interpretation of data.

The resulting themes were then placed in a matrix that reported the theme and the focus groups that identified each theme. This clarified which themes were the most commonly identified. Issues and themes that were repeated across several groups were identified as repeated themes. Issues identified by only one group were reported as other themes. The range of repeated and other themes were then reported for each question using illustrative quotes from respondents that represented the consensus of responses.

## RESULTS

The teachers involved in the focus groups were generally keen to express their opinions and were quite consistent in many of the issues they identified. All teachers contributed to the discussions with no individual teachers dominating. Summary tables from each discussion question have been included. These tables reflect the number of focus groups that identified each theme however, the discussion of the repeated and other themes that were identified for each question provides the most comprehensive interpretation of the descriptive information obtained from the teachers.

### PRIORITY OF DRUG EDUCATION

As a way of placing classroom based cannabis education in the context of the whole school and determining the level of professional commitment schools had to cannabis education the teachers were asked the following question:

What level of priority does drug education have at your school?

#### Repeated Themes

The majority of teachers from each group indicated that although drug education had a high priority within the Health and Physical Education learning area, in the context of the whole school it had a low priority.

*Drug education has a high priority in the health and PE learning area but in the context of the whole school it probably not a high priority – the school is extremely academic so the focus is on academic subjects. Because we have pushed it through our area we now do drug education from year 8 –12. So within our area it is important but in the whole scheme of the school it is not important. (Focus Group 1)*

*In terms of the whole school, pretty much health Ed is the bottom of the barrel but within health Ed, drug Ed would have a high priority. (Focus Group 2)*

*Drugs features prominently in the health program in all years. But I'm not sure what happens in the rest of the school. So in our learning area, yes it has priority but in the context of the whole school I don't think it is a high priority. (Focus Group 3)*

Many teachers believed that the low status of Health Education in schools accounted for this low priority.

*It's really difficult when there is a tiny minority in the school who see health as important and that rubs off on students and parents. (Focus Group 2)*

*We're continually losing Health time for other subjects like LOTE "oh well what can go" Health because it's not important. (Focus Group 3).*

Furthermore, the majority of teachers commented that the school's administration was often not supportive of Health Education and drug education and this reinforced the low priority of these subjects in the school.

*I have been in a school where they have timetabled year 9 health against upper school recreation time so all the phys edders have been timetabled to rec., so who ever the unlucky teachers who are free with at low load get to teach the health. That's the priority of that school. (Focus Group 4)*

*In a couple of weeks I'm doing a drug education evening for parents but that has come from me and I am doing all the organising, Admin has done nothing to support it.*

*(Focus Group 1)*

The theme of low priority of drug education was not the consensus amongst all groups however with a minority of teachers in three of the groups suggesting that drug education had a high priority at their school. Teachers in two of these groups indicated that the school's involvement in externally funded projects such as the School Drug Education Project (SDEP) and the Marijuana Education Project (MEP) has raised the priority of drug education in their schools.

*I think it has a quite high priority at our school – we have taken on the marijuana education project this year and that was through the Principals insistence because it is a bit of a problem in our area – we have had a number of kids in treatment because of their use and that happens in English as well. But I agree with XXX it really depends what school you're in as to the priority it has in the whole school and even within the health education area. (Focus Group 1)*

*Generally it has a high priority: the community at the school see it as very important part of education in health; [it's] seen as a priority by [us] joining the SDEP as [an] 'Option A' school; [and we are] looking at rewriting the policy and how we educate students. (Focus Group 1)*

Similarly the theme of non supportive school administration reinforcing the drug education's low priority was not supported by all teachers with a minority in three groups indicating that their schools administration was supportive of drug education.

*Once a year we have a drug education forum for the whole community and that is supported well by the school so it is an area that is supported. I think we are well supported by the admin. (Focus Group 1)*

### **Other themes**

One teacher felt that the SDEP's impact had diminished in terms of raising the priority of drug education.

*Have been away -when left Drug ed through SDEP was a big thing, have been back now 6 months, I don't feel anything has changed if anything it has gone back to where it was before the SDEP. People made a big effort back then but now the impetus has gone and nothing has changed. The Health and PE dept is still the least important department. It's like the teachers that are chosen to teach Health are not necessarily trained. They're the unlucky ones that get shoved into it – we need to fill someone's timetable up – oh look we need another health teacher – that'll do. (Focus Group 2)*

Teachers from one of group commented several times that drug education had a high priority in their school due to the high prevalence of cannabis use in their community.

*At my school drug education has quite a high priority. Where we are the marijuana culture is quite prolific so that's one of our main focuses. (Focus Group 1)*

Table 40 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the level of priority drug education have in their school.

**Table 40: Priority of Drug Education**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
Low Priority		X	X	X	X
	High within Health and Physical Education learning area but low in terms of the whole school	X	X	X	X
	Low status of Health Ed, therefore drug ed low priority	X	X		X
	Administration not supportive	X	X		X
	Impetus of SDEP has declined		X		
High Priority		X	X	X	
	Administration is supportive	X	X	X	
	External projects has increased priority	X	X		

## THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF CANNABIS EDUCATION

To determining the amount of cannabis education including education relating to cannabis law and the quality of the cannabis education programs currently being conducted in schools the teachers were asked the following question:

How much cannabis education and cannabis law education occurs at your school?

The following prompt was used to focus discussion on the quality of the program:

What do you think about the quality of cannabis education?

### Repeated Themes

All teachers agreed that cannabis education was conducted at their school during Health Education. They indicated that the amount of cannabis education students received varied from school to school as did the year or years in which it was conducted. Although the majority of teacher acknowledged that cannabis education occurred over several years, the number of lessons students received also varied from school to school. The majority of teachers acknowledged that if possible they would like to spend more time on cannabis education identifying lack of time in Health Education and the crowded curriculum as the major reasons for the variability in time allocated to cannabis education.

*At the moment we've got such limited time and so many things impinging on us like you've got to look at cannabis, you've got to look at driving. There are all these things and then you look at your program and you think, well where am I going to fit all these things in? (Focus Group 4)*

Due to the time constraints, many teachers indicated that the amount of cannabis education conducted was often dependent on the priority individual teachers placed on cannabis education.

*Some teachers spend more time on alcohol or harder drugs because they see cannabis as a safer, social drug so not much time needs to be spent on it. (Focus Group 2)*

It was clear that that cannabis education occurred predominantly in lower school (years 8-10) with only one teacher indicating that their school conducted drug education with post compulsory students (years 11-12). The majority of teachers from two groups viewed this as a major concern due to the high prevalence of cannabis use amongst this age group (15-17 year olds).

*My major concern is how to get an ongoing message through to year 11 and 12s who are more likely to be using drugs than the rest of the school. (Focus Group 1)*

When prompted about how much time within the cannabis education program was devoted to cannabis law, the majority of teachers indicated that again it varied from school to school and was largely dependant on student and teacher interest and knowledge. All teachers acknowledged that it is important to discuss the laws with students but again time was a constraining factor.

*Hugely important because there is a lot of confusion out there but where's the time. (Focus Group 4)*

*It really gets down to each teacher and what they think is important to cover, and if the kids aren't interested and if the teacher doesn't know it then it won't get covered. (Focus Group 3)*

When prompted about the quality of the cannabis education programs currently being conducted in schools, all teachers agreed it varied and was dependent on the school and the degree of commitment to drug education of the teachers in the school.

*But we are only telling you what we do and obviously we are committed to drug education or else we wouldn't be here – I can't say what other health teachers do let alone the non health teachers who score health on their timetable. (Focus Group 1)*

All teachers agreed that there were very poor programs running in schools. They identified the K-10 Curriculum as an example of an out-dated, content driven program that was still being used.

*In some schools they are still teaching K-10 which is 10 to 12 years out of date. For teachers who have been teaching a long, long time K-10 is easy, they know it, it's packaged lessons, they've done it for 10 years, why not keep doing it. (Focus Group 1)*

*The thing that still maintains itself in our system is the K-10 syllabus, it is so outdated but teachers still use it because it is easy to use they have used it in the past so its easier than spending time looking for something new. (Focus Group 4)*

In addition all teachers indicated that poor programs operated in many schools due to the lack of interest or expertise of the teachers conducting the program.

*Content drive, not skills based even though we preach skills based, its easier to teach content, especially the older teachers. They like to teach the content have their assessment package – yes the skills are important but you can't measure them so put them aside and then my classroom becomes too noisy and I don't like that. (Focus Group 2)*

*Get rid of non-health teachers because it is all content stuff. They don't involve themselves in the lesson - it might be a bit of information, a video and a word sleuth and that would be their lesson but no group work, no interaction. And they wouldn't talk about harm reduction because they don't even understand it. They don't understand the value of – they think they'll be condoning it. (Focus Group 2)*

*I have done a lot of relief this year so have seen how a lot of PE departments run and I would say that the majority of Phys Edders are not really that interested in teaching health. Some teachers have said to me its really sad that the kids here are not interested in drug ed but the same teacher said well I think it's us – we're not really interested anymore. (Focus Group 2)*

Many teachers also commented that the quality of the program was affected by the low status of Health Education in the school, which in turn affected the teachers.

*See that's the attitude, it's health Ed it's not important and I am not going to give any more of my energy. I can't be bothered doing this; I'd prefer to give them a couple of worksheets. (Focus Group 2)*

Pre-service teacher training was also identified as a contributor to poor programs being conducted in schools.

*Pre service training is a problem – some don't have to do any health training and the stuff they do is so outdated. So 'praccies' come to me and I make them do some Health co's they are never going to go to a school and just be able to teach PE. (Focus Group 2)*

Some teachers suggested that the use of non-teaching experts could impact negatively on the program.

*Yes that so right we've had one police officer in who was just shocking – you may as well have had a dog up there barking at them. It was a complete waste of time. So you really need to know the person before you let them talk to the kids. (Focus Group 4)*

This was not the consensus of opinion in these groups however where other teachers indicated that external experts could make a positive contribution to the program as long as they could relate to students and their message was consistent with that of the program.

*It's good to get the police in to explain to kids the laws regarding drugs – but not all cops do it well. (Focus Group 4)*

All the teachers acknowledged that good cannabis education programs also ran in schools albeit they were likely to be the exception rather than the rule. The majority of teachers identified the School Drug Education Project resource as an excellent program.

*We should get behind and promote the SDEP package because it's a great resource – it's about to be updated. (Focus Group 1)*

Several teachers also identified the Marijuana Education Project as a positive resource. Teachers from most of the groups identified aspects of programs they thought were positive including the 'Greening Out' video; discussion relating to the implications of cannabis use and the potential harms associated with its use in different contexts; and the importance of skill based rather than content driven programs.

*We have consciously changed to a more skills based program rather than knowledge based - its better to be able to teach a kid how to say no to a joint or stay safe at parties when it may be there than to teach them the long term affects. (Focus Group 1)*

### **Other themes**

Very few other themes emerged from this discussion. One teacher commented that teaching about cannabis law was difficult due to the lack of resources specifically designed for young people, outlining how the law relates to them.

One teacher emphasised the importance of a supportive school administration if teachers were to be supported in their efforts to provide a good program.

*I'm in charge and have done a lot of work to get admin to put their hands in their pockets so we get a lot of support from admin so we get lots of time to meet and discuss and get all the staff that teaches health along to quality PD. Over the past few*

*years we've asked for a lot of time and money and we've got it so the staff feel more valued I guess – they think well they're putting in for me so I can now give back. So if you want us to do it well you need to give us some time and money and train our staff – or it's not worth it. If people value what you do you internalise it and are prepared to put more into it. (Focus Group 2)*

One teacher identified the need for a pamphlet regarding the law that was relevant to young people.

*You see I have not seen a good resource or pamphlet that is about marijuana and the law. Not one that I could give to kids and they could go oh that's what could happen to me and to adults. (Focus Group 1)*

Another teacher suggested that a more holistic approach to drug education, incorporating resilience skills and harm reduction strategies would be beneficial to students.

*There is a change to resilience type teaching where we are looking more holistically and giving kids skills to be more resilient to a range of potentially harmful things. Giving generic skills so they can make an informed choice. Then it doesn't matter what particular drug it is they have the skills to either say no or if they say yes to do it as safely as possible. (Focus Group 4)*

Table 41 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the quantity and quality of cannabis education programs conducted in schools



**Table 41: Quality and Quantity of Cannabis Education**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub Theme</b>	<b>FG1</b>	<b>FG2</b>	<b>FG3</b>	<b>FG4</b>
<b>Cannabis Education</b>	Cannabis education is conducted during health education	X	X	X	X
	Would like to spend more time	X	X	X	X
	Not enough time in Health Education	X	X	X	X
<b>Amount varies</b>	Year 8 and 9 (MEP) and mainly year 10	X	X	X	
	Little bit maybe 1-2 lessons each year		X	X	X
	Year 8 and 10 (couple of lessons)	X			X
	Year 9 (couple of lessons)	X			X
	Depends on individual teachers	X	X	X	
	None in upper school	X	X		
	Covered in upper school	X			
<b>Cannabis law</b>	Important to discuss it with students	X	X	X	X
<b>Amount varies</b>	Depends on student interest and knowledge	X	X	X	X
	Quite a lot	X			
	Not as much as on other issues	X			
	Other teachers may not discuss the law and may have poor knowledge	X	X	X	
	No student friendly resources regarding cannabis law and how it affects them	X			
<b>Quality of program varies</b>	Depends what school your in and the teachers in the schools	X	X	X	X
<b>Poor programs</b>	Poor programs conducted in schools	X	X	X	X
	Some still use K-10	X	X	X	X
	Affected by teachers	X	X	X	X
	Affected by low status of health education		X		X
	Affected by pre service training			X	X
<b>Good programs</b>	Good programs conducted in schools	X	X	X	X
	Greening Out (video)	X		X	X
	School drug education Project Resource	X	X		X
	Marijuana Education Project	X			X
	Discuss implications of cannabis use	X		X	
	Use of non teaching experts			X	X
	Skills based programs	X	X		
	Resilience programs				X

## IMPACT OF CANNABIS LAWS ON CONDUCTING SCHOOL BASED CANNABIS EDUCATION

To determine if the current cannabis laws have any impact on the way cannabis education is conducted in the classroom and the teachers perception about any impact the proposed scheme may have on the way classroom based cannabis education is conducted the following questions were asked:

How do the current laws affect educating young people about cannabis in the classroom?

Will the proposed scheme change this?

### Repeated Themes

All teachers agreed that the current cannabis laws have no impact on the way they conduct cannabis education.

*Not really – I mean the message for those not using is don't use but the reality is that some do and it's available so we have to talk about potential harms but also ways to reduce harm and that won't change. (Focus Group 1)*

*Current laws don't impede on communication with students and talking about harm reduction strategies. You can't be naïve with your kids and think just c'os its illegal, they aren't going to do it, any kids who will try it - so you have to talk about safer ways of doing it. (Focus Group 2)*

They acknowledged they could only speak for themselves as committed drug education teachers, and felt that other teachers with less interest, expertise and knowledge may not understand the concept of harm minimisation therefore they may not discuss it in relation to cannabis education for fear of giving the impression of condoning cannabis use.

*I think a lot of teachers don't want to talk about harm minimisation because they think the kids will think its ok to smoke – or because they are from the old school where saying no is the only thing to teach. They just don't understand the concept. (Focus Group 4)*

When prompted about the proposed scheme and if they thought it might impact on the way cannabis education was conducted in the classroom, all teachers agreed that the new cannabis laws would need to be discussed with students. Many teachers indicated that the coverage of other issues would not change nor would the way they taught it.

*Of course we will need to talk about how the new laws relate to kids but we will still talk about harms and harm reduction strategies and the fact that most young people don't do it. (Focus Group 3)*

Table 42 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the impact of cannabis law on classroom-based education

**Table 42: Impact of Cannabis Law on Classroom Based Education**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Current laws</b>	No impact	X	X	X	X
	Some teachers don't understand harm minimisation	X	X	X	X
<b>Proposed scheme</b>	Will need to discuss new laws	X	X	X	X
	Other issues probably won't change	X	X		

### IMPACT OF CANNABIS LAWS ON SCHOOL DRUG POLICY

To determine if the current cannabis laws have any impact on schools policy regarding cannabis and the teachers perception about any impact the proposed scheme may have on school's cannabis policy the teachers were asked the following questions:

How do you think the current laws impact on school drug policy?

How will the proposed scheme impact on school drug policy?

#### Repeated Themes

All teachers agreed that due to the illegal status of cannabis, schools took a hard line regarding any incidence of use by students and this was reflected in the school drug policy. The majority of teachers were concerned that many teachers would not be able to recognise cannabis or if a student was affected by it.

*Most teachers wouldn't be able to recognise if a kid was stoned at school anyway. And they don't really want to deal with it anyway because they would have to do the paper trail. (Focus Group 2)*

Although they all identified suspension as a consequence of a student being caught using or in possession of cannabis, the manner with which the suspension was imposed varied.

*Automatic suspension – not cigarettes but alcohol or cannabis, yes suspended straightaway (Focus group 4).*

One teacher explained that their policy did involve suspension but it would only happen once all other options had been exhausted. This teacher also indicated that this policy was a community policy developed with the feeder primary schools incorporating input from students and parents.

*Our policy does not have suspension as the first line of attack. With ours its contact the parents, send to the nurse who can arrange counselling. Suspension is the last option. Ours is a community policy that was developed with all our feeder schools, parents and the school counsellors so we all have the same policy so students and parents should know it very well and what to expect. We also got the policy printed in a pamphlet form and sent to every parent in our school and the feeder schools. And in that brochure we spell out the process, provide help numbers and also the medication policy. (Focus Group 1)*

Another teacher indicated that although suspension was an option, the policy was flexible to cater for the individual requirement of students.

*My school doesn't have a hard policy that if you do this you'll get 5 days suspension, this you'll get 10 days etc, it's really taken on the individual and on their home circumstances. Because for some students sending them home for 5 days is not the best thing to do for the student. Serious crimes get punished but it's according to each student. (Focus Group 3)*

Many teachers indicated that the suspension involved counselling although they were unsure who did the counselling and what it entailed. They also commented the provision of counselling was dependent on staff availability.

*We are re-writing ours but the immediate response is suspension with counselling. (Focus Group 1)*

*Last year we developed a policy about what would happen if student caught using at school. If they are caught they get suspended and we have tried to have counselling as well but it is a time and money issue – who is going to do the counselling, who is going to follow this up when we all have full teaching loads. (Focus Group 3)*

Contrary to this many teachers commented that there was no counselling involved either prior to the student's suspension or on their return to school. Again the lack of staff to provide counselling was emphasised.

*See we go straight to suspension even with cigarettes now. Kids know that if they're caught smoking around the grounds their gone. Maximum of 10 days and there's no counselling before they come back. And again that's a time issue because unless you have a police officer or psych no one has any time to do counselling. (Focus Group 3)*

The majority of teachers agreed however that suspension was not the best option but the school had to be seen to be, "doing something" (Focus group 3).

*Yeah pretty much naughty child, go home, smoke some more at home, come back and nothing ever changes. (Focus Group 2)*

*I'm in two minds because there is the side that says oh suspension, she got to go home for 2 days great but then there are the students who think oh god he got suspended so the deterrent may work for them. But they are the kids who will probably never do it anyway, and the ones who do and get suspended think its cool. (Focus Group 2)*

*I don't think suspension is a great idea because it's just like extra days off school and for some kids that's attractive and the parents don't really care and the type of kid that would smoke at school probably doesn't have a great interest in school in the first place. (Focus Group 3)*

All teachers agreed that parents would be notified if a student was in possession of cannabis. Two groups indicated that police would be informed but only if the student was caught with cannabis on them or with their personal possessions.

*The drug would be confiscated, police informed and parents come and take your kid away (Focus Group 1).*

*Depending on your policy the police don't have to be notified because if there is no actual drug then you don't have to notify them. It's up to the discretion of the school. (Focus Group 1)*

Two groups identified in- school suspension as a more effective option.

*At our school they may get suspended for cannabis but they would be reluctant to. Because with the act as it is anything over 3 days they have to provide work at home. They tend to give in school suspension which is good because they are on the premises they tend to get spoken to by the psych, or the year coordinator, or the chaplain so there is the opportunity for counselling but whether it happens or not I'm not sure. (Focus Group 2)*

When prompted about whether the proposed scheme would result in any changes to school policy all teachers agreed there would probably be no changes because cannabis would still be illegal and the changes would not affect student. Although the majority believed suspension was not the best option, they felt that the reality was the lack of staff and money for counselling left schools with no other option.

*The law doesn't change for juveniles so we should really have to change our policy. (Focus Group 1)*

*I think they will have a hard line towards it because it is still and illegal substance. (Focus Group 3)*

*Not really because unless you can get some time and expertise for counselling the easy option is suspension – not necessarily the best option, but its easy and it looks like the school is doing something. (Focus Group 4)*

The majority of teachers indicated that counselling should be provided to students especially due to the focus on counselling in the proposed scheme.

*Much better than suspension because that doesn't change anything and if counselling is a push of the proposed scheme then schools should complement not contradict it. (Focus Group 2)*

*I think maybe because there is an emphasis on counselling in the proposed scheme schools may need to provide more counselling and even more education for the whole family. (Focus Group 3)*

*And that's the thing about the new scheme, if you were caught with it on the street you'd receive counselling but if you're caught with it at school you'll get suspended. (Focus Group 4)*

Some teachers thought that schools might revisit their policy because media attention on the proposed scheme may arouse parent interest in school policy. Most of these teachers agreed however that they did not think this would result in any changes.

*I think with the profile with cannabis use and that the media will grab hold of the changes etc. I think a lot of schools may revisit their policy because there may be more parents interested in knowing how the school deals with it. (Focus Group 1)*

*The new scheme may attract media therefore parents may want to know what the line at school will be so the policy may get revisited but I don't think it will change. (Focus Group 3)*

Table 43 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding how cannabis law impacts on school drug policy

**Table 43: Impact of Cannabis law on School Drug Policy**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Current Law</b>	Cannabis is an illegal substance so schools take a hard line	X	X	X	X
	Many teachers wouldn't be able to recognise if a students was affected by cannabis	X	X	X	X
	Parents notified	X	X	X	X
	Suspension	X	X	X	X
	Suspension doesn't work	X	X	X	X
	Suspension with counselling	X	X	X	
	Suspension without counselling	X		X	X
	In school suspension		X	X	
	Suspension is last resort	X			
	Police notified if drugs found	X			X
<b>Proposed scheme</b>	No change to school policy because still an illegal substance	X	X	X	X
	Media may arouse parent interest so policy may be revisited	X		X	X
	More counselling should be provided to complement proposed scheme		X	X	X

### **STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT CANNABIS LAW AND THE PROPOSED SCHEME**

To determining student's understanding of the current cannabis laws and their perceptions of the proposed scheme, the teachers were asked the following question:

How well do you think students understand the current cannabis laws?

How well do you think students understand the proposed scheme?

#### **Repeated Themes**

All teachers agreed that many students displayed inaccurate knowledge about the current cannabis laws and had limited understanding of how the laws related to them. They indicated they spent much of their time when talking about the current cannabis law, dispelling common myths.

*The impressions that the kids have are so often so wrong. I know I spend a lot of my time dispelling the myths they have about what is the law. (Focus Group 1)*

*I say at the moment it is illegal to do this, this and this and they will say but what about this so you have to dispel myths and I talk more about the implications of the*

*law. If you get caught and convicted this is what could happen to you. (Focus Group 2)*

The majority of teachers thought that many students believed that the possession of cannabis was legal.

*I started telling them what they were and so many of them did not believe me. They didn't believe it was illegal and they didn't believe it was illegal to have 2 plants, and didn't believe it was illegal to have dirty bong. They said no. (Focus Group 2)*

Furthermore many of the teachers were concerned that other teachers with less expertise and knowledge did not talk about the law with their students or even more concerning didn't understand it themselves and therefore gave incorrect information to students.

*But when you have teachers who don't know what the law is and they're the ones who are teaching the kids it is a big problem. They are the ones who are guiding the kid's knowledge and they don't know it themselves. (Focus Group 1)*

All the teachers identified student confusion about penalties relating to cannabis offences as a major concern. The majority of teachers indicated that students generally don't believe they will be caught for a cannabis offence and in the unlikely event they are, they are convinced that nothing will happen to them.

*And they don't think the current laws are enforced. They know its there but they think police turn a blind eye to it. (Focus Group 3)*

*I think when you do chat to them about the law they think that nothing will happen to them anyway- just a slap on the wrist. (Focus Group 2)*

*The kid's biggest thing with the law is that when they turn 18 all their records will be expunged – so it doesn't matter. (Focus Group 1)*

Many teachers commented that students were confused due to the variety of ways young people could be dealt with regarding cannabis related offences.

*There are so many different options that can happen to kids i.e. they could get cautioned, nothing happens, referral to Juvenile justice team etc – it is very confusing (consensus) (Focus Group 1)*

Furthermore they felt that the inconsistent way in which the sanctions were applied added to the confusion and made it difficult to teach in the classroom.



*And they way it is applied by the police too because the kids come back and say I know someone and they only got told off – so the police don't apply consistent sanctions. So instead of saying ok you've been caught this is the step we are going to take they say oh well naughty boy, slap on the wrist don't do it again and the kids come back with that information and when you try to tell them there are that it is a criminal offence they say well the cops are doing this. That makes it difficult to teach about it from our point of view as well. (Focus Group 1)*

In response to prompting about the level of understanding students displayed regarding the proposed scheme, all teachers agreed that students were confused and did not realise that any changes to the cannabis law would only apply to adults.

*When I talked to them about the proposed changes they were all saying you beauty – its legal and I'm going no. (Focus Group 3)*

*I don't even think they realise there is a youth offenders act. So that is what I spell out to them so all this changes to cannabis laws are for adults and its got nothing to do with them really. (Focus Group 1)*

The majority of teachers acknowledged that there was a general lack of understanding of the term decriminalisation, with many students thinking that it meant that the possession of cannabis was going to be legal.

*That's the impression I get and they don't understand that there is a difference between decriminalised and legal. (Focus Group 3)*

Interestingly what emerged from this discussion about the proposed scheme was that all teachers felt the media coverage to date had only added to the confusion at both the staff and student level.

*Yes the kids all think its legal and we have staff that think its legal – they think the legislation has gone through and then the kids think it applies to them not adults. (Focus Group 1)*

The majority of teachers indicated that the media coverage to date had impacted negatively on student knowledge and young people were receiving incorrect messages with no corrective education.

*I think the discussion in the media about changing the legislation is having a very negative effect on young people in the sense that they are getting these wrong messages and this is a significant amount of time that this is taking for these discussions and legislation to go through. In this time there has been no education to*

*these young people about what is going on and that really concerns me. (Focus Group 1)*

### **Other themes**

One teacher suggested that most students did know that the possession of cannabis was illegal but due to the lack of sanctions they didn't believe the illegality was a problem.

*I think they do know its illegal but they also know nothing is going to happen so they don't consider it to be a problem that it is illegal. (Focus Group 2)*

One teacher was extremely concerned that he found it extremely difficult to obtain information about the proposed scheme to clarify the situation for students.

*As part of the xxx Regional organising committee with the SDEP we tried to get the SDEP to clarify certain information it was very difficult to get anything. We managed to get a press statement from Bob Kucera to clarify things but that has changed again to the proposed scheme you have given us. (Focus Group 1)*

All teachers in this group were adamant that it was critical to keep schools informed.

*It is critical that teachers are kept up to speed with the changes that happen. I do regional training and often when we deliver this type of information they are astounded – they have no idea. I would say the majority of teachers in schools don't know what the law is now let alone what the changes may mean and that is a very dangerous situation if kids are questioning teachers and teachers are giving out wrong messages such as it is decriminalised now. That is what they are likely to say. And it's disgusting that the only information they are getting is from the Western Australian. (Focus Group 1)*

This group also suggested that the Mirrabooka trial and cautioning had further confused students' perception of the state of the law.

*There has been lots of different trials that have confused the issue – the Mirrabooka trial etc – cautioning was really confusing and something else we were not give the correct information about. (Focus Group 1)*

One teacher from a different group indicated that the media had not caused any more misconceptions among students regarding the proposed scheme that were not already there.

Table 44 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding student understanding of the current cannabis law and the proposed scheme.

**Table 44: Student Understanding of the Current Cannabis Law and the Proposed Scheme**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Poor knowledge of the current law</b>	Students have poor knowledge about the current law	X	X	X	X
	Need to dispel myths	X	X	X	X
	They think its legal	X	X	X	
	Teachers don't understand current	X	X		X
	They know its illegal but don't care		X		
<b>Confusion about penalties</b>	Students are confused about the penalties they may receive if caught	X	X	X	X
	Don't believe they will get caught	X	X		X
	Nothing will happen to them if they get caught	X	X		X
	The different penalties confuse students	X	X		
	Inconsistent sanctions cause confusion	X	X		
<b>Confusion about proposed scheme</b>	Think it will be legal	X	X	X	X
	Don't understand difference between decriminalisation and legal		X	X	X
<b>Media</b>	Media coverage so far has had a negative impact	X	X	X	X
	Staff and students confused	X	X	X	X
	Young people receive wrong messages and no education	X	X		X
	Difficult to get clarifying information	X			
	Critical to keep schools informed	X			
	No more misconceptions about law that weren't already present		X		

### EDUCATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED SCHEME FOR CANNABIS

To determine the level of support required by schools to maximise student's understanding of the proposed scheme for cannabis the teachers were asked the following questions:

What supports will be required at the school level to ensure students receive education about the proposed scheme for cannabis?

## Repeated Themes

All teachers agreed that for students to receive education about the proposed scheme a resource should be produced that could be easily implemented in the classroom. Many of these teachers emphasised that due to the lack of funds in Health Education, the resource should be provided to all schools free of charge.

*Need information at your fingertips so that if a new teacher comes in you can say here is a pack and it's got all the information you need. A package of lessons as well would be useful and also some opened assessment tasks. (Focus group 4)*

The majority of teachers indicated that the resource should cater for the individual differences of students including their cannabis use status, different learning styles and cultural differences.

*There has to be a range of resources to cater for where kids are at in their using and for the different learning styles. (Focus Group 1)*

*Must cater for different learning environments. If you're talking about CD ROMs well it's often a battle to get into a computer lab so you need to make sure it's accessible. Also you need to look at the language issue – kids from our school are multicultural. (Focus Group 1)*

Furthermore, many teachers identified the types of teaching strategies and content they felt should be incorporated into the resource.

*It needs to be skills based – so they have skills and confidence to deal with situations where dope is available whether its to find a good way to refuse or the assess risks in situations. (Focus Group 1)*

*So it needs to be interactive, incorporating the laws for both juveniles and adults, potential harms and risks, harm reduction strategies and it needs to cater for different learning styles. (Focus Group 2)*

Given the low status of Health Education in schools, of concern to a great many teachers was the lack of time in Health Education to deliver effective education about the proposed scheme.

*Firstly someone needs to inform schools, like the Minister, that time has to be set aside for this education and that it is not only the responsibility of Health Education to find this time. (Focus Group 3)*

This theme was further reinforced by a large number of teachers who commented that any education about the proposed scheme should occur across the whole school and not only in Health Education.

*And really if it were done across the whole school it would have more status and maybe more parents would be interested. Like Society and Environment could deal with the facts and us the skills etc. There are a lot of teachers who do talk to about drugs and have a good rapport with kids so it would be great if it could be coordinated across other subjects. (Focus Group 1)*

*The problem in high schools is that so much of the curriculum is doubled up in other subject areas and if we could sit down and all plan our programs together across all departments and you could say well you do this, and this. It would be fantastic. (Focus Group 4)*

In addition to an appropriate resource, professional development of all teachers was identified as a key issue in ensuring students receive the correct information about the proposed scheme.

*Whatever the package is it needs to be accompanied by professional development (PD). You can't hand out packages without PD because that's when they sit on the bench and teachers go back to what they know and feel comfortable with. (Focus Group 1)*

*You see teachers want to be shown the strategies – without PD it doesn't happen because teachers don't want to have to wade through a big file to find the strategies, they want them shown to them and then oh great off we go. Like the SDEP stuff is great but you have to read it and find the strategies and that takes time so it's easier to go back to what you always do. Unless you take all teachers through the package and show them it then it may get used otherwise they will just take out what suits their teaching style and that will be it. The problem is you can't force them to do it. (Focus Group 2)*

All teachers agreed that if teachers were to attend professional development out of the school it was essential that funds to cover their teacher relief were provided. They all felt however, that a more effective method would be to conduct any professional development at a whole of school professional development day. This they believed would ensure that all staff members received the correct information and training given that Health Education can be taught by non-health trained teachers and that cannabis is discussed in many subjects with a variety of teachers. Furthermore they believed a pamphlet just for teachers should be designed outlining the proposed scheme.

*But everyone needs to receive the PD first hand to try to get him or her interested again. It doesn't work sending one or two people because the others have no ownership. (Focus Group 2)*

*Teacher training needs to involve not only those who teach in the Health and PE learning area but in some schools its people without the Health Ed. background that are teaching it. And it is such a cross curricula issue all teachers need to be aware. (Focus Group 1)*

Teachers in two groups discussed the need for quality presenters to deliver the professional development at the school to ensure that teachers were engaged and received the correct messages. School Drug Education Project (SDEP) staff and SDEP Regional Organising Committees were identified as excellent presenters with credibility at the school level.

*You need people with the knowledge but also with the skills to be able to present. Like SDEP. (Focus Group 1)*

The majority of teachers commented that education at schools was vital but schools could not do it in isolation. They indicated that a proactive, aggressive media campaign should also be implemented aimed specifically at young people.

*Need an aggressive media campaign. To change anything you need to use all media outlets aggressively – it's not something schools can do in isolation. (Focus Group 1)*

The majority of teachers felt that it was crucial that young people be consulted in planning any media campaign so that it was relevant to the issues that concerned them. They also indicated that young people with a range of cannabis use experiences be consulted and the consultation focussed on harms that were relevant to young people. It was also suggested by many teachers that the message should to be one that could easily be supported in schools.

*Very important that young people are consulted with about what young people are likely to take on board etc. (Focus Group 1)*

*They have to be very careful here because I've done a lot o work on smoking with my kids and have shown them adds that have won critics awards etc and kids think that they're not at all relevant to them. So they really need to talk to kids about what is relevant to them and what is likely to engage them.. (Focus Group 1)*

*Need to find out what harms are of concern to young people if any for it to be relevant That's right if the message isn't relevant to them it will be lost. (Focus Group 3)*

*So there needs to be a lot of consultation with kids with a range of drug use experiences. (Focus Group 2)*

During this discussion the involvement of parents in school based cannabis education emerged. It was clear that the majority of teachers felt that parents were not interested in cannabis education or health education in general due to the low status of the subject.

*Even at parents nights you see a line of parents wanting to see the maths or science teachers and you'd be lucky to get one wanting to speak to you about what your doing in health. (Focus Group 3)*

*I mean half my class got Ds and no parents contacted me so you think well the parents don't care about Health Ed either. (Focus Group 2)*

Many teachers indicated that the few parents who were interested were probably the ones teachers needed to see the least.

*Even with parent nights etc that we've done on drugs its not the parents you want to attend that come – it's the parents who need it least you know the caring committed ones that come. (Focus Group 1)*

*But for parents who know their kids are using its like a big secret and they don't want you to know because they don't want o be seen as failures or not being able to cope with it themselves. (Focus Group 3)*

There was disagreement regarding whether the introduction of the proposed scheme would create more parent interest in classroom based cannabis education. Those who thought it would felt that any interest would be more directed at school drug policy relating to dealing with incidence of use.

### **Other themes**

Teachers in one group indicated that time and money should be provided for a staff member at each school to prepare a package that could be implemented in the school.

*More money and time to give a day or two days to each school to use the time to find resources, to write up programs, time for health teachers to go and sit with year 8 team or other subject teams and talk about how to integrate it cross curricular. (Focus Group 4)*

One teacher emphasised the importance of incorporating normative education into any program about the proposed scheme.

*The MEP we're doing – one of the lessons with year 8s focuses on how many kids actually do use it because sometimes they think more use than actually do and its*

*important to get across to children that there are not very many regular users at their age. So it's actually the norm not to use. (Focus Group 3)*

Another teacher thought it was important that an outside expert presented the changes in the law to students.

*I think it's good to have an expert –police officer, psych whatever, other than the classroom teacher to give out some of this information because it makes them think oh well this must be important it's not just Ms XX sprouting off. But as long as it's the right person as well. It has to be someone who can relate to the class. Sometimes having an expert helps especially when it comes to the law because if we're a little confused about the law ourselves, it's the same as having a Psych to come in and talk about the mental effects. (Focus Group 3)*

One teacher indicated it was crucial to explain to students the reasons underlining the proposed scheme in general.

*It's important to inform the kids about the reasons behind these changes. For instance trying to separate the markets is all about harm minimisation. And that is the focus of what we do in our education because you can't say just don't do it. So if kids understand why it's changing and it's to protect them that's an important thing to get across to them whether it's from an expert or from us. (Focus Group 3)*

One group identified the need for a help line to be set up to cater for those who did not understand the proposed scheme.

*And a help line as well that will be able to deal with questions about the information that is being disseminated because people are going to want to ring up and say well I'm not sure what this means etc. (Focus Group 1)*

Table 45 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the supports required at the school level to ensure students receive education about the proposed scheme for cannabis?



**Table 45: Supports Required for School Based Education About the Proposed Scheme**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub Theme</b>	<b>FG1</b>	<b>FG2</b>	<b>FG3</b>	<b>FG4</b>
<b>Education issues</b>	Teacher friendly resource	X	X	X	X
	Combination of strategies	X	X	X	X
	Education about the proposed scheme needs to occur across the whole school	X	X		X
	Need more time in Health Education	X		X	X
	Resource needs to be free	X		X	
	Student friendly pamphlet	X			
	Time for staff member to prepare package				X
	Should focus on normative use			X	
	Need to discuss the reasons behind the changes			X	
	An expert to talk to students			X	
	Need money and time for it to happen cross curricular				X
	List of counselling agencies				X
	<b>Teacher issues</b>	All teachers (not only health teachers require professional development	X	X	X
Paid teacher relief		X	X	X	X
Whole school PD		X	X	X	X
A flyer for all teachers		X	X		X
Train the trainer model		X	X		
Quality people to deliver PD		X			X
School Drug Education Project Regional organising committees could deliver PD if trained		X			

**Table 45 cont: Supports Required for School Based Education About the Proposed Scheme**

	Can't make teachers go to out of school PD				X
<b>Community issues</b>	Schools can't do this isolation	X	X	X	X
	Proactive media campaign required	X	X	X	
	Young people need to be consulted	X	X		
	Need to find out what harms are of concern to young people if any for it to be relevant	X	X	X	
	Message needs to be easily support in schools	X		X	
	A help line	X			
<b>Parental issues</b>	Most parents not interested	X	X	X	X
	Those who are, are the ones who least need to be	X	X	X	X
	The proposed scheme may increase parents interest	X	X	X	
	The proposed scheme will not increase parent interest	X	X		

### **IMPACT OF CANNABIS LAW ON STUDENT'S CANNABIS USE**

To determine how the teacher's thought that the current cannabis law impacted on student use and whether the proposed scheme would increase or decrease student use they were asked the following questions:

How do you think the law impacts on students' cannabis use?

How do you think the proposed scheme will impact on students' cannabis use?

### **Repeated Themes**

All teachers indicated that they thought the current cannabis law had no impact on student use. They believed many students were experimenting or purposely indulging in cannabis use as risk taking behaviour and the law had neither an encouraging or deterrent effect.

*I cannot recall one kid who said that the law was an issue in deciding to use or not in all my discussions with both upper and lower school. (Focus Group 2)*

In addition the majority of teachers commented that students believed there were no consequences even if they were caught using cannabis.

*Yes I do - they think that it's not going to happen to me. There is no real consequence if I am caught. It's not a problem –everyone does it, (Focus Group 1)*

*They think its inconsequential – they will choose their lifestyle and off they'll go. (Focus Group 1)*

*Kids don't take much notice. They decide they're going to take the risk and do it anyway. (Focus Group 4)*

Some teachers commented that consequences of a cannabis conviction might impact on use.

*They only time they take notice is when you talk about how a conviction can impact on their future careers and travel when they are older. (Focus Group 2)*

*They do listen especially when you mention drug test for safety reasons etc but it's probably only really relevant for upper school because it's too far down the track for lower school. (Focus Group 2)*

Other teachers disagreed and thought that although the consequences of a conviction may have an impact on students who were not using cannabis, for those who were using the consequences were not relevant to them.

*Maybe for non-users the consequences of being caught may reinforce their decision not to use – like not being able to travel and work in some countries. To a small degree maybe but for those who are regular users I don't think it will have any impact. (Focus Group 3)*

*But those things like not being able to travel etc may have an impact as they get older but not at 13 or 14. Unless it's happening next week or tomorrow kids don't necessarily see the relevance to their situation. (Focus Group 3)*

When asked if they thought the proposed scheme would have any impact on student use all the teachers agreed that it wouldn't due to the increased social acceptability of the cannabis.

*There is a whole cannabis culture now that is embedded in some young people. It is more of an acceptable drug now. It is easy to get and easier to carry than alcohol. (Focus Group 2)*

*I don't think they think the laws really apply to them. They just think that the kids that smoke it will continue to do so and the one that don't won't. (Focus Group 3)*

Some teachers commented that the proposed scheme may impact on those thinking about trying it.

*Those kids who are wavering – not sure (Focus Group 1).*

*For me the law was a big factor in my choosing not to use it so if there are others like me and they get the wrong message that it's alright now and it can't be harmful if they're making legal then that could encourage some to use it. (Focus Group 3)*

During this discussion teachers were prompted about what factors they thought did impact on use. All teachers indicated that students' perceived cannabis to be a safe drug and this perception did little to discourage use.

*My students do not want to accept that cannabis is a dangerous drug and they think tobacco is 'yuk' but cannabis is cool. (Focus Group 1)*

*They think it's a safe drug and there is nothing wrong with using it. And it's natural, it grows as a plant so it can't be that bad for you. That's another argument they use all the time. (Focus Group 3)*

The majority of teachers identified parents' attitudes towards cannabis use as a strong influence on students' use.

*I think home is more an issue and what their parents do and think. We've had kids use and sold at school because their parents grow it. (Focus Group 2)*

*You know a lot of these kids who smoke do so at home – their parents smoke so I don't think any laws in that situation will impact on their use. (Focus Group 3)*

*And at times they come from that culture as well where mum and dad smoke so it's ok for me to smoke – they've done it for 30 years and they're fine. (Focus Group 1)*

Some teachers also indicated that peers could impact on students' cannabis use.

*Friend too – who they mix with. If they are at risk educationally they tend to forge friendships with others who are similar and they are probably more likely to use. (Focus Group 2)*

## Other themes

One teacher thought that students would view the proposed scheme for cannabis as a softening of the law and this may encourage use.

*They will see it as a softening of the law and it will make it easier for them to think its ok to do. Any change is automatically seen as a softening. People won't read the law. They won't understand the law so they will this change as allowing them to do something they weren't previously allowed to do. It is giving the impression that smoking marijuana is ok (Focus Group 4).*

Another teacher suggested that many students believed that everyone used cannabis and that this myth could encourage use. One teacher thought that the only thing that would impact on a students already using was if they knew someone who had experienced some harms due to cannabis use.

*The strongest thing that can impact on kid's use of anything is watching someone being harmed by it. We can tell them that its bad for them and the evidence is that if you tell them its bad for them it won't make any difference. (Focus Group 4)*

Another teacher made the point that it was difficult to impact on students who were already using because even if they knew that there were harms associated with cannabis use they would still continued to use.

*It's hard because kids know that alcohol is potentially the most dangerous drug but they still go out and binge drink every weekend. (Focus Group 4)*

Table 46 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the impact that cannabis law has on student cannabis use.

**Table 46: Impact of Cannabis Law on Student Cannabis Use**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Current law</b>	No impact	X	X	X	X
	Consequences of a conviction		X	X	X
	Consequences of conviction not relevant to younger students		X	X	X
<b>Proposed scheme</b>	Won't impact on those already using	X	X	X	X
	May impact on those thinking about using	X		X	
	Its softening the law, giving the impression that cannabis is OK				X
<b>Influences on use</b>	Perception cannabis is a safe drug	X	X	X	X
	Parents	X	X	X	X
	Friends		X	X	
	The myth that everyone smokes it	X			
	Know of someone who has been harmed by cannabis				X
	Aggressive media campaign	X			
	Difficult to impact on use				X

### **SUPPORTS REQUIRED AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL TO ASSIST STUDENTS SEEKING HELP FOR THEIR CANNABIS USE.**

To determine the level of support currently available at the school level for students seeking help for their cannabis use and the supports structures required to cater for students seeking assistance, the teachers were asked the following questions:

What supports are required at the school level to ensure students who seek help for cannabis use are catered for?

### **Repeated Themes**

The majority of teachers indicated that most students would not seek help from the school for their cannabis use because the support structures available in schools did not encourage young people using cannabis to access them. Furthermore given the hard line most schools have regarding cannabis use with suspension being the predominant consequence of being caught, students may feel intimidated about admitting they used cannabis to school staff.

*Kids don't seek help at school because all you can say is go see the chaplain go see the psych and they go oh no I'm not that bad and they may not know them from a bar of soap. They may make the first attempt with you and then you sort of have to refer them on. (Focus Group 2)*

*The problem in schools is that the kids who use marijuana are not likely to go to the police or chaplain or school psych because they do look upon them as people they can trust – they're not cool. (Focus Group 4)*

*I think that kids think that if they tell someone they will get in trouble. (Focus Group 3)*

Most teachers felt that schools did have supports in place to cater for students who wanted some help, mentioning the student services team, the school nurse and the school psychologist as people students could talk to.

*Our chaplain has had a fair bit of experience with counselling users and our nurse is great as well. (Focus Group 1)*

*But we do have a lot of support at our school. The school nurse is very supportive. We've got the school psych; we've got one person who manages all the behaviour stuff. So it's very well set up for counselling. (Focus Group 3)*

*I think the student services team these days are more aware of it and can deal with it very well. (Focus Group 1)*

Many teachers indicated that they were unsure about how many times these people had been approached regarding cannabis use and that perhaps they did not have the positive rapport with students required to encourage students to access them. Furthermore many teachers commented that often classroom teachers were the first point of reference for students with whom they had a positive relationship but due to lack of training and time most teachers did not feel confident counselling students.

*Not all the kids once they tell you want to go a spill it to the psych or someone else – they've got enough trust in you that's why they chose you in the first place. And you say do you want to go and talk to so and so and they say no I don't really want to talk about it again. (Focus Group 3)*

*We've always sending students on and it's because we don't have time. And they haven't gone to the psych because they don't know them from a bar of soap and we send them on. And we may have known them since they were in year 8. They probably thing we don't care. (Focus Group 3)*

They acknowledged it would be an advantage if they had some counselling training but this would require time and money that schools don't have.

*It would be good to have these skills though because we are usually the teachers the kids are likely to feel comfortable talking about it with. (Focus Group 2)*

*I wish I had some skills in counselling. I mean I probably have but I always seem to be sending them on because I'm worried that I might say or do the wrong thing. But sometimes I might be the best person to talk to them. (Focus Group 3)*

*I don't feel I have the counselling skills to be able to talk to these kids plus I have no time. And there are the legal issues that we may not be aware of. (Focus Group 2)*

*Time and training so that you can follow them up because that is one of the reasons I got into teaching because I do like them and I can relate to them and I do want to help if I can. (Focus Group 2)*

Time was repeatedly identified as the main resource required for schools to provide better counselling services.

*But there is no time these days. You have to do more and more and the thing we used to do years ago which is talk to kids we now handball because we have no time. It's the time not money you need and I guess because that translates to money schools wont give you the time you need to support kids. (Focus Group 2)*

*But time is the issue – you would need at least one period a week free where you could say to kids I'm free at this time come and see me and follow them up – take them out of class – show them you do care. (Focus Group 3)*

*I think there are people in schools who have the skills but not the time. If schools were given the money to be able to release a teacher to work with kids on a needs basis, for instance if a kid is caught with any drug, tobacco, alcohol doesn't matter and the teacher could be released to work with that kid one on one that would be terrific. (Focus Group 4)*

Some teachers were concerned that schools needed to forge better links with outside agencies with expertise in drug counselling. They provided examples of the difficulties and frustration experienced when trying to get outside agencies to intervene in family situations where they thought students were at risk.

*With some kids though who are at risk and there is not the family support trying to get early intervention through Family and Children's services is very difficult. Its like they actually have to break the law - steal a car or something before someone intervenes. Without parent support early intervention is impossible. When school principals, deputies, the whole student services team are busting their gut to try to get these government agencies to help these kids and you don't get any support –it's sad and really makes the job hard. There needs to be much stronger links and understanding between schools and Family and Children's Services especially in those dire and quick acting situations. (Focus Group 1)*



*That is a problem in schools because if a kid did come to you and say they had a substance abuse problem where do you refer them to and having easy access to a counsellor would be fantastic. Just ring a number and they would say they'd be out as soon as they could. And for kids who were suspended you could say well you have to attend counselling that would be fantastic. (Focus Group 4)*

### **Other themes**

One group of teachers discussed the advantages and disadvantages of school-based police officers in schools. They agreed that their usefulness regarding assisting students seeking help was dependent on the type of person they were and their attitude towards young people using cannabis.

*Some are great and really like it but there are others who should not be allowed near kids. (Focus Group 1)*

*Yeah I thought I knew this guy but I couldn't believe what he was saying to these kids – and they wonder why kids don't respect them (Focus Group 1).*

The same group commented that the student services team structure supported the proposed scheme with its focus on counselling for young people if they offend. But again having the 'right' people with the 'right' skills and rapport were seen as critical.

One teacher in another group provided an example of a community approach to providing help for young cannabis users.

*When I was teaching down south we had 14 kids suspended for cannabis – they used to go off campus and go to a spot and all smoke and so a sting was organised with the police and they were caught. And so there were 14 kids all got suspended at once in a school of 600 in a small country town. I organised a counsellor to come in and spend some time in the school and she was there just to help kids who used on a regular basis. We got funding from groups around the community and she stayed for a whole term and did lots of counselling for groups and started up an anon and other things in the community so she worked with the kids, parents and the whole community. But the school was willing to take that on and that's not something that happens very often. (Focus Group 4)*

Other teachers in the group commented that it would be beneficial if that approach could be duplicated in other communities but acknowledged it was unlikely to happen.

*Absolutely not done in the metro area and I think that would be fantastic if that could happen. I there was a community approach to it because what happens in the schools is only the tip of what actually happens in the community. (Focus Group 4)*

Table 47 reflects the focus groups that identified each theme regarding the existing and required supports at the school level to cater for students seeking help about their cannabis use.

**Table 47: Support Structures Required at the School Level to Cater for Students Seeking Help About Their Cannabis Use**

Theme	Sub Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Seeking help</b>	Students don't seek help		X	X	X
<b>Existing supports</b>	Students services team, school nurse and chaplain available	X	X	X	
	Student services team very aware and have community links	X	X		
	School Nurse	X		X	
	School Psych			X	
	School based police officers can be positive and negative influence.	X			
	School well set up for support			X	
	Student services team supports proposed scheme	X			
<b>Other supports</b>	Teachers should be available to counsel		X	X	X
	Need time, money and training		X	X	X
	Teachers don't have skills or time to counsel – first point of reference –always referring on		X	X	
	Teachers concerned about legal issues		X	X	
	Need to be better links with outside agencies to help with early intervention	X			X
	Community Approach				X

## SUMMARY – STUDENT SURVEY COMPONENT

### METHOD

Year 9 and Year 12 students from a broadly representative sample of 11 government high schools in the Perth Metropolitan area were surveyed using a quantitative questionnaire which addressed: knowledge of cannabis and the laws applying to it; attitudes to cannabis use and cannabis law; respondents' patterns of cannabis use; and drug market factors. Prior to the survey, the questionnaire was piloted with students and underwent expert review to assess face and content validity.

### RESULTS

#### The sample

A total of 2,638 eligible questionnaires were received, 62% from Year 9 students and 38% from Year 12 students. The sample was 51% female and 49% male. The age distribution reflected the sampling of years 9 and 12 students, 61% were from 13 or 14 years of age and 37% were 16 or 17 years old. Recruitment of respondents accessed young people from across the metropolitan Perth.

#### Knowledge about cannabis, health, extent of use and the law

In general respondents did not possess a high degree of knowledge about cannabis. They were more knowledgeable about cannabis related harms, risks and problems than prevalence of use and current cannabis law. Thus, while some 81% believed that people who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug and 71% believed that use increased the risk of mental illness in some people, only 31% correctly disagreed with the statement 'most 13 year old students in WA have tried cannabis', and only 36% believed that currently in WA it was not legal for an adult to have a small amount of cannabis for their personal use.

This suggests that education for school age children needs to focus not only on the harms associated with cannabis, but importantly on challenging incorrect assumptions that overestimate prevalence of school age use and informing them about the laws which apply to it, in particular that use is illegal.

#### Knowledge of penalties

Overall, respondents appeared to have a better knowledge of the current penalties applying to use of cannabis by adults than they did to use by juveniles such as themselves. For example only 28% thought a juvenile caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis could get a criminal conviction recorded, and only 33% thought it would result in referral to a juvenile justice team while the most commonly identified correct response was a formal caution by a police officer. In contrast, with regards to penalties for use by an adult 74% correctly identified a fine, 52% a formal caution and 51% a criminal conviction.

The relative lack of knowledge about the penalties people of their age are possibly able to receive for a variety of cannabis offences suggests that education for school age people about the penalties applying to cannabis offences should ensure that it addresses those for school-age people and not simply adults.

### **Understand meaning of ‘Prohibition with civil penalties’**

While the phrase *prohibition with civil penalties* is well understood by the majority of adults (eg. Lenton & Ovenden, 1996) only about a third (32%) of all school student respondents in this study understood the term, 23% thought it would be illegal with a criminal conviction recorded, while about 5% thought it meant such offences would be legal, and 35% were unsure.

This suggests a more thorough explanation of the prohibition with civil penalties approach is required with school age students. An example is ‘much like speeding in a motor vehicle, still illegal, not condoned, but resulting in a fine, but not a criminal record.’

### **Attitudes towards cannabis use and cannabis law**

Attitudes towards cannabis use were generally as expected. The younger respondents (year 9) and those who had never used cannabis generally had less favourable attitudes to the drug. Thus, while 65% of year 9s and 77% of those who had never tried cannabis agreed the statement *I would be concerned if my friends were using cannabis*, only 50% of year 12s and 30% of those who had tried the drug did so.

Similarly, year 9s and those who had never tried cannabis in general held less favourable attitudes to softening cannabis laws. For example, 31% of year 9 students compared to 24% of year 12 students agreed that *the current cannabis laws, which apply to adults in WA, deter people under 18 from using cannabis*.

With regards to the specific question of whether cannabis use by an adult should be a criminal offence this trend continued. Half (49%) of year 9 students and 40% of those who had never used the drug thought it should not be criminal, compared to 66% of year 12 students and 82% of those who had ever used cannabis.

Those who said *cannabis use by an adult should be a criminal offence gave health effects, because it stops people from using and because cannabis leads to other drug use*, as the top three reasons why it should remain a criminal offence. There were few differences between year 9s, year12s, those who had never tried cannabis and those who had ever tried the drug in ranking these reasons. The most frequently nominated reasons given by those who said that *cannabis use by an adult should NOT be a criminal offence* were that *private use of small amounts doesn't hurt others, police can focus on more serious offences* and that *cannabis was no worse than alcohol or tobacco*. There were no differences between year 9s, year12s, those who had never tried cannabis and those who had ever tried the drug in ranking these reasons.

### Reasons why young people use cannabis

With regards to reasons why people their age use cannabis, both *makes them feel good* and *because their friends use* were rated highly by the whole sample. However, year 12's and those who had ever used cannabis gave *to appear cool* and *pressure from friends* far less often than year 9 students and those who had never used the drug. It would appear that these more disparaging reasons are less likely to be cited by the older and cannabis experienced students.

### Opportunity to use cannabis and other drugs

Overall 86% of all students said that they had had the opportunity to use alcohol, 54% to use cannabis and 25% said that they had the opportunity to use other illegal drugs. As expected, Year 12 students were more likely to say that they had had such opportunities than year 9 students. It will be interesting to see whether there is any change in the post-change study of opportunity to use cannabis.

Interestingly, while only 16% of those who had not used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had an opportunity to use other illegal drugs, 53% of those who had used cannabis in the last 12 months said they had ever had such an opportunity. This does not suggest that cannabis use has a causal relationship to other drug use, but that recent cannabis users are more likely to be exposed to opportunities to use other illicit drugs. This is consistent with research that suggests early cannabis use is a (non-causal) marker of other drug use and suggests that the mechanism which links the two is more likely to be social and concerned with peer networks and drug use opportunities than it is to be due to the drug itself (Kandel, 2002).

### Lifetime cannabis use/non use and intention to use

Overall, 37% of the sample said that they had ever used cannabis and 63% said they had not. As expected significantly more (50%) year 12 students had used cannabis than their year 9 counterparts (28%). Lifetime use figures were comparable with other recent data from a benchmark survey of WA school students which found 53% of 17 year old students and 28% of 14 year old students had ever used cannabis (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004). Those in the current study that had not used cannabis were asked whether they intended to try the drug. Although the majority (64%) of students who had never tried cannabis indicated that they would not try it in the future, a higher proportion of year 9 students (12%) reported that they would try cannabis, compared to year 12 students (9%).

### Reasons for not using cannabis

Those who had never used cannabis were asked their reasons for not using. There were no significant differences between year 9 and year 12 responses on this item. The top five reasons given were: *I don't need it* (76%), *can have a good time without using it* (67%), *concerned it might effect my health* (64%) and *it's illegal* (60%). It is worth noting that although cannabis remains illegal under the CIN scheme, the illegality of cannabis was the fourth highest reason cited for non-use. This is consistent with the findings below that if cannabis were made legal significantly more of the sample stated they would use the drug.

### Frequency of drug use

While 39% of year 12 students had used cannabis in the last 12 months, 24% of year 9 students had done so. Furthermore, 21% of the year 12s, compared to 16% of the year 9s, had used the drug in the last 4 weeks. There was little difference between the proportion of year 12 (12%) and year 9 (11%) students who said that they had used cannabis in the last week. The proportion of year 9 and 12 students who had ever used cannabis were not significantly different from the proportions found in a 2002 benchmark survey of West Australian high school students (Fairthorne, Hayman & White, 2004).

Whereas 19% of year 12 students indicated they had ever used illegal drugs other than cannabis only 9% of year 9 students did so. The majority of these students in both years indicated that they had only used one to two times. More year 12 students (14%) also reported using other illegal drugs in the last 12 months than year 9 students (6%).

On their own right these figures are not remarkable, but their comparison with data from the 18 month evaluation of the new cannabis laws will be a key indicator of the extent to which the changes have affected cannabis or other drug use among school children.

### Drug-related risky activities, problems and health problems

A larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (34%) in the last 12 months said they had undertaken any of the risky activities while affected by those drugs compared to those who had used alcohol alone (27%) or cannabis alone. Among year 12 students, more reported driving a car while affected by cannabis alone (9%) than alcohol alone (6%), or alcohol and cannabis in combination (6%).

A larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (30%) or cannabis alone (28%) in the last 12 months said they had experienced any of the problems over that period compared to those who had used alcohol alone (23%). *School work suffering* the most frequently mentioned problem for those using cannabis alone (13%) over the last 12 months but was the 6<sup>th</sup> most common problem mentioned by students using alcohol alone (6%), or alcohol and cannabis in combination (8%).

There was a significantly larger proportion of students who had used alcohol and cannabis in combination (46%) in the last 12 months that said they had experienced any of the health problems over that period compared to those who had used alcohol alone (39%) but not those who had used or cannabis alone (42%). With regards to alcohol, year 12 students who had used alcohol in the last 12 months were significantly more likely to report health problems with the use of alcohol on its own, than their year 9 counterparts. Hangovers were the most common health problem identified with regards to use of alcohol on its own.

These findings clearly point to the increased risky behaviours and subsequent health harms associated with the use of cannabis and alcohol in combination, over either drug on its own. They suggest that harm reduction messages targeted at young people who use cannabis should emphasise the risks of poly drug use, especially with alcohol. The finding that use of cannabis alone, or in combination with alcohol, was significantly more likely to be associated with school work suffering is consistent with longitudinal studies that have shown that early heavy use of cannabis is associated with poor educational achievement and early school leaving (Lynskey & Hall, 2000). The finding supports the decision taken to exclude those under 18 from the CIN scheme, but rather have them continue to be dealt with through the juvenile justice system. In this way they can now be issued with conditional cautions which can require that alone, or with their parents, must attend counselling in order to be eligible for a caution. While juvenile cannabis use may not necessarily be sinister, assessment by a qualified counsellor may help identify those whose pattern of use puts them at risk of such problems

### **Passenger in car where driver drug affected**

More students indicated they had been a passenger in a car in the last 12 months where the driver had been affected by alcohol alone (34%) than cannabis alone (21%) or a combination of the two (13%). Year 12 students were more likely than year 9 students to report having been in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol alone (25% Vs 13%) and alcohol and cannabis (15% Vs 8%). There were no significant differences between the proportion of year 9 and year 12 students who had been in a car in the last 12 months where the driver was affected by alcohol alone.

### **Age of first use**

The mean age of commencing cannabis use for year 9 students who had tried the drug was 12.2 years compared to 13.9 years for year 12 students.

### **How first obtained cannabis**

The majority of students who had used cannabis said that they had first obtained it by being *given it by a family member or friend* (62%), followed by being *given it by someone else* (15%). Some 9% said they first got cannabis by *buying it from a dealer or supplier*, whereas 7% *bought it from a friend or family member*. Only 2% *grew it*.

### **How usually obtain cannabis now**

The majority of students who had used cannabis said that they now usually obtain cannabis by being *given it by a family member or friend* (38%), followed by *buying it from a dealer or supplier* (15%) or buying it from a friend or family member (13%). Some 7% said that nowadays they usually get it given to them by *someone other than a friend or family member* and 4% said they usually *grow it*.

It will be of interest to see whether the introduction of the CIN scheme is associated with a different pattern of acquiring cannabis for school children who use the drug. Currently 51% of the sample said they mainly got their cannabis from a friend or family member.

### **Ease of obtaining cannabis now**

Overall 85% of students who had used cannabis said it was *easy* or *very easy* to obtain now. Year 12 students who had used the drug, compared to their year 9 counterparts, were more likely to say it was *very easy* (53% vs 46%) to obtain.

Although there are likely to be ceiling effects for the proportion who find it *easy* or *very easy* to obtain, the proportions who find it *very easy* should provide an adequate baseline to test whether the proposed legislative changes in WA result in increased availability of cannabis for year 9 and 12 students.

### **Method of cannabis use**

Overall here was no significant difference between year 9 and 12 cannabis users regarding their most common method of using the drug. Most commonly mentioned method of use was *a bong* (51%), followed by *joints* (17%) *a pipe* (14%) and a *bucket bong* (12%). Only 2% said that they mostly ate it.

### **Location of use**

Again rankings of the usual place of use did not differ between the years. Most commonly mentioned were *friends house* (69%), *parties* (61%), *public places* (44%), *own home* (32%) *in cars* (21%) and *school* (16%).

### **People usually use with**

Overwhelmingly students who had used cannabis said they usually used cannabis with close friends (80%). However, a greater proportion of year 12 students (84%), compared to year 9 students (77%) said they mostly used with close friends; whereas more year 9 students (6%), compared to year 12 students (2%) said that they usually used with siblings.

### **Other drugs offered when buying cannabis**

Respondents were asked *which of the following drugs have you ever been offered when obtaining cannabis?* The majority of students (55%) reported being offered alcohol when obtaining cannabis. Whereas 60% of year 9 students indicated they had been offered alcohol when obtaining cannabis only 50% of year 12 students did so. Both years reported that the next two most commonly offered drugs when obtaining cannabis were amphetamines (35%) and ecstasy (23%). Some 34% of year 12 students reported not being offered any other drugs when obtaining cannabis compared to 24% of year 9 students. However, one has to question whether some of the year 9 responses involved over-reporting of offers of other drugs when buying cannabis.

It is possible that within 18 months of the proposed legislative changes there may be shifts in the cannabis market toward a larger proportion of the market being supplied by small-time user-growers, rather than larger scale suppliers with other criminal associations who also supply other drugs. If this happens changes may occur in the



availability of other drugs when obtaining cannabis. If these changes are evident among school age consumers of cannabis then one could expect effects on the proportion offered other drugs when obtaining cannabis.

### Supplying Cannabis

Most (58%) of those who had ever used cannabis said that they had never supplied the drug to others. Some 29% said that they had *given it to friends or family*, 25% had *given it to others* 18% had *sold to others* and 14% had *sold it to friends or family*. Responses for year 9 and year 12 cannabis users were very similar.

There would be understandable community concern if the introduction of the CIN scheme was associated with increased involvement in cannabis dealing by school students. While there is no indication in the literature that this is likely to occur, the post-change data collection should allow any such changes to be detected, should they occur.

### Reasons for using cannabis

The majority of students who had used cannabis (56%) identified using cannabis *for fun/to have a good time*. Some 48% said they did so because it *makes me feel good* and 43% identified *experimenting /curiosity*. *Pressure from friends*, was the least commonly identified reason for both years, identified by 11% of year 9 users (ranked 14<sup>th</sup>) and 5% of year 12 users (ranked 13<sup>th</sup>).

McBride (2002) noted that responding to 'peer pressure' is a core component of 'resistance skills training', one of the approaches to school drug education which has been claimed to have an impact on student's behaviour. However, this approach has been called into question by others (e.g. Paglia & Room, 1998) who say the approach over plays the influence of peer pressure on behaviour, compared to peer preference. The results in the current study are consistent with this in that preferences for the drug (to have fun, feel good, experiment, etc) were identified by more cannabis using school students as reasons they used the drug than was the influence of peer pressure. This has implications for the content of school drug education.

### Continued use of cannabis

Just under half (48%) of students who had ever used cannabis indicated that they still used the drug. There was a significant difference between years with 54% of year 9 students who had ever used the drug compared to 43% of year 12 students saying they still used cannabis.

### Quitters reasons for not using cannabis

Those who had used cannabis but no longer did so were asked their reasons for no longer using the drug. The majority of students (52%) indicated that they no longer used cannabis because they were *only experimenting* and the next most common reason mentioned by both years was they could *have a good time without using it*. There were differences between the rank of reasons given by year 9 and year 12 quitters beyond these first two ranks. For example the third most common reason for year 9 students (30%) was *it was affecting my health*, however only 17% (rank 8) of year 12 students selected this reason.

### **Anticipated impact of a change to prohibition with civil penalties on own use**

Overall, 55% of students said that they would *not try* cannabis if civil penalties applied 9% said they would *use as often as they do now*, 6% said they *would try it*, and 27% were unsure. Among those who had never used the drug 70% said they would *not try it* if prohibition with civil penalties were introduced and 5% said they *would try it*. Some 24% of those who had not used the drug said they were unsure how a change to civil penalties would affect their use.

Some 26% of those who had ever used cannabis said that they *would not use it*, 7% said they'd *try it*, 8% *would use it less often than [they do] now*, 25% would use it *as often as they do now*, and 3% would use it *more often than they do now*. Some 32% of those who had used cannabis said that they were unsure what impact a change to civil penalties would have on their use.

### **Anticipated impact of a change to legalisation on own use**

Overall, 50% of students said that they would *not try* cannabis if it were legalised 10% said they would *use as often as they do now*, 9% said they *would try it*, and 24% were unsure. Among those who had never used the drug 66% said they would *not try it* if it were legalised and 11% said they *would try it*. Some 22% of those who had not used the drug said they were unsure how a change to legalise cannabis would affect their use.

Some 23% of those who had ever used cannabis said that they *would not use it*, 6% said they'd *try it*, 3% *would use it less often than [they do] now*, 27% would use it *as often as they do now*, and 14% would use it *more often than they do now*. Some 27% of those who had used cannabis said that they were unsure what impact a change to legalisation would have on their use.

### **Comparison of likely impact of legalisation versus prohibition with civil penalties on own use**

Students were asked two questions about the impact of different legal structures on their own intention to use cannabis. Given the imperfect understanding of the terms *prohibition with civil penalties* and *legalisation* the questions explained the terms as 'civil penalties, like a fine for speeding in a motor vehicle' and 'made legal, so using it was no longer an offence of any kind'. Taken together these last two items suggest that among students who had not used cannabis, significantly more (11% Vs 5%) said that they would try the drug if it were legalised, compared to if prohibition with civil penalties were introduced. Furthermore, among those who had used the drug 14% said they would use it more often than they do now under a system of legalisation whereas only 3% said they would use more under a prohibition with civil penalties scheme.

Two obvious conclusions emerge from the results on likely impact of the legislative changes on respondents cannabis use. Firstly, consistent with the literature which failed to find that 'decriminalisation' of cannabis affected rates of use by children

(Johnson, O'Malley & Bachman, 1981; Neill, Christie & Cormack, 1991; Saveland & Bray, 1980 each cited in Single, Christie & Ali, 2000), whether cannabis use for adults is illegal and criminal or illegal and subject to criminal penalties has little impact on drug use intentions of the vast majority of the school students in this sample. Secondly, the results suggest that if cannabis use for adults was *legalised* a significantly larger minority of current non-users would use it and current users would use it more often. Together, these conclusions support introduction of *prohibition with civil penalty* schemes such as the CIN scheme, but not legalisation of cannabis use. It will be interesting to see whether the post-change data support the use intentions of the school students surveyed in this pre-change phase of the study.

## **SUMMARY – TEACHER FOCUS GROUP COMPONENT**

### **METHOD**

Four focus groups of six drug education teachers each were held in August 2002. Teachers from twenty schools responded with two schools offering to send two teachers. The total sample comprised eleven males and thirteen females (n=24) representing a variety of schools reflecting teaching experiences covering a broad socio economic range.

Prior to attending the focus groups, participants were sent a one page summary of the proposed legal changes for cannabis to inform their consideration of the issues covered in the focus group discussion. It should be noted that students were not given such a summary as part of the student survey component.

The focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and were audio-taped and transcribed to ensure that the richness of the data was retained and accurately presented. Transcripts were subjected to theme analysis.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Context**

The majority of teachers from each group indicated that although drug education had a high priority within the Health and Physical Education learning area, in the context of the whole school it had a low priority. Many teachers believed that the low status of Health Education in schools accounted for this low priority.

#### **The amount and quality of cannabis education that occurs currently**

All teachers agreed that cannabis education was conducted at their school during Health Education. They indicated that the amount of cannabis education students received varied from school to school as did the year or years in which it was conducted. Although the majority of teacher acknowledged that cannabis education occurred over several years, the number of lessons students received also varied from school to school. The majority of teachers acknowledged that if possible they would like to spend more time on cannabis education identifying lack of time in Health

Education and the crowded curriculum as the major reasons for the variability in time allocated to cannabis education.

It was clear that that cannabis education occurred predominantly in lower school (years 8-10). All teachers acknowledged that it is important to discuss the laws with students but again time was a constraining factor.

When prompted about the quality of the cannabis education programs currently being conducted in schools, all teachers agreed it varied and was dependent on the school and the degree of commitment to drug education of the teachers in the school. All teachers agreed that there were very poor programs running in schools. They identified the K-10 Curriculum as an example of an out-dated, content driven program that was still being used.

School drug education materials on the CIN Scheme have been developed by The Drug and Alcohol Office of the WA Health Department in conjunction with the School Drug Education Project of the WA Department of Education. It will be of interest in the post phase data collection to see whether these materials are well received by school drug educators.

### **Effect of current law on conducting cannabis education in the classroom and belief about how proposed laws would change this**

All teachers agreed that the current cannabis laws have no impact on the way they conduct cannabis education. When prompted about the proposed scheme and if they thought it might impact on the way cannabis education was conducted in the classroom, all teachers agreed that the new cannabis laws would need to be discussed with students. Many teachers indicated that the coverage of other issues would not change nor would the way they taught it.

There was a concern by some in the community that the CIN scheme would undermine drug education in schools. The views of the drug educators accessed in this focus group study suggest that this is unlikely.

### **Impact of existing and proposed cannabis laws on school drug policy**

All teachers agreed that due to the illegal status of cannabis, schools took a hard line regarding any incidence of use by students and this was reflected in the school drug policy. When prompted about whether the proposed scheme would result in any changes to school policy all teachers agreed there would probably be no changes because cannabis would still be illegal and the changes would not affect students. Although the majority believed suspension was not the best option, they felt that the reality was the lack of staff and money for counselling left schools with no other option.

This again suggests that the CIN scheme is unlikely to have an effect in School drug policy.

### **Students understanding of current cannabis law and the proposed scheme**

All teachers agreed that many students displayed inaccurate knowledge about the current cannabis laws and had limited understanding of how the laws related to them. They indicated they spent much of their time when talking about the current cannabis law, dispelling common myths.

The majority of teachers thought that many students believed that the possession of cannabis was legal. The majority of teachers indicated that students generally don't believe they will be caught for a cannabis offence and in the unlikely event they are, they are convinced that nothing will happen to them.

Many teachers commented that students were confused due to the variety of ways young people could be dealt with regarding cannabis related offences. Furthermore they felt that the inconsistent way in which the sanctions were applied added to the confusion and made it difficult to teach in the classroom.

In response to prompting about the level of understanding students displayed regarding the proposed scheme, all teachers agreed that students were confused and did not realise that any changes to the cannabis law would only apply to adults. The majority of teachers acknowledged that there was a general lack of understanding of the term decriminalisation, with many students thinking that it meant that the possession of cannabis was going to be legal. The majority of teachers indicated that the media coverage to date had impacted negatively on student knowledge and young people were receiving incorrect messages with no corrective education.

One teacher was very concerned that he found it extremely difficult to obtain information about the proposed scheme to clarify the situation for students. All teachers in this group were adamant that it was critical to keep schools informed.

Since the time when these data were collected the public education about the CIN scheme has been conducted. While this has attempted to address some of the misunderstandings described above, it is unclear to what extent this has been successful. It is likely that at least some of the public, and some school aged children will continue to misunderstand the scheme. For that reason, it is important that school based drug education addresses the issue in an ongoing way, rather than simply at implementation of the scheme.

### **Supports needed to ensure students receive education about the proposed scheme for cannabis**

All teachers agreed that for students to receive education about the proposed scheme a resource should be produced that could be easily implemented in the classroom. Many of these teachers emphasised that due to the lack of funds in Health Education, the resource should be provided to all schools free of charge. The majority of teachers

indicated that the resource should cater for the individual differences of students including their cannabis use status, different learning styles and cultural differences.

Furthermore, many teachers identified the types of teaching strategies and content they felt should be incorporated into the resource, principally that it be skills based and interactive. Some commented that any education about the proposed scheme should occur across the whole school and not only in Health Education.

In addition to an appropriate resource, professional development of all teachers was identified as a key issue in ensuring students receive the correct information about the proposed scheme. All teachers agreed that if teachers were to attend professional development out of the school it was essential that funds to cover their teacher relief were provided. They all felt however, that a more effective method would be to conduct any professional development at whole of school professional development day. Teachers discussed the need for quality presenters, such as School Drug Education Project (SDEP) staff and SDEP Regional Organising Committees, to deliver the professional development at the school to ensure that teachers were engaged and received the correct messages.

The Teacher Support Package of the School Drug Education Project is being reviewed in the second half of 2004. The above feedback from teachers will be provided to that review so that it can be considered in the review of materials for school drug educators.

### **Impact of cannabis law on student's cannabis use**

All teachers indicated that they thought the current cannabis law had no impact on student use. They believed many students were experimenting or purposely indulging in cannabis use as risk taking behaviour and the law had neither an encouraging or deterrent effect. When asked if they thought the proposed scheme would have any impact on student use all the teachers agreed that it wouldn't due to the increased social acceptability of the cannabis.

This again reinforces the earlier conclusion that the introduction of the CIN scheme is unlikely to have an impact on the cannabis use of school children, and is consistent with earlier research in this regard.

### **Supports required at the school level to assist students seeking help for their cannabis use.**

The majority of teachers indicated that most students would not seek help from the school for their cannabis use because the support structures available in schools did not encourage young people using cannabis to access them. Furthermore given the hard line most schools have regarding cannabis use with suspension being the predominant consequence of being caught, students may feel intimidated about admitting they use cannabis to school staff.

Most teachers felt that schools did have supports in place to cater for students who wanted some help, mentioning the student services team, the school nurse and the school psychologist as people students could talk to.

This suggests that there may be functional barriers to cannabis using school children seeking assistance from within the school system for problems associated with their cannabis use. It is likely that improving responses for such students will involve a combination of attempting to reduce these barriers, but also looking outside the school system (eg. GPs, psychologists and others in the community) to facilitate access to appropriate support for school children seeking counselling or other treatment for problematic cannabis use. One of the aims of the CIN scheme is that in removing the risk of a criminal conviction, it would remove a significant disincentive to adult cannabis users seeking help from their GP and others, for problems associated with their cannabis use. As part of this, strategies are being put in place to develop the capacity of GPs to deal with cannabis-related problems. There will likely be an opportunity to improve access for school students to GPs and other primary health care workers who are able to assist them to address their problematic cannabis use.





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**APPENDIX 1:  
INVITATION LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**



The Principal

Date

Dear

The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), Curtin University of WA has received funding to conduct research to evaluate how the changes in legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences applying to adults will impact on the cannabis use, knowledge and attitudes to cannabis and the law of secondary school students. The research involves surveying approximately 2000 Western Australian year 9 students and approximately 1400 year 12 students. Fifteen Perth metropolitan schools have been randomly selected to be involved in the study. (School) SHS was one of these schools therefore I am seeking your permission to conduct the survey with all your year nine and year twelve students during second term 2002. Researchers from NDRI will conduct the surveys at a time convenient to the school. The survey will take approximately 30- 50 minutes to complete and asks a series of questions about each respondents current non-use or use of cannabis; attitudes to cannabis use and the law; knowledge of the laws and the consequences of being apprehended; impact of the perception of the laws on non use, use, intention to use and context of use; and drug market factors. The surveys are anonymous therefore at no time will individual students or schools be identified. An information and consent form will be provided to all year 9 and year 12 students and parents outlining the purpose of the study, the nature of the survey questions and emphasising confidentiality issues and their rights as participants. I have enclosed a copy of the consent form for your information however the method of obtaining consent can be modified to suit your schools individual needs. Pending your approval would the year 9 and 12 coordinators be the appropriate people to coordinate with me the timing of the surveys? I can offer the school \$100.00 to offset any costs conducting the survey might incur.

The study has received ethics approval from Curtin University of Technology and has been endorsed by the Western Australian Department of Education. I will contact you by phone in a week to discuss these requests however I am more than happy to meet with you in person if you prefer. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Farrington  
Project Coordinator



**APPENDIX 2:  
STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**





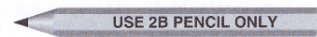
# NATIONAL DRUG RESEARCH INSTITUTE Curtin University of Technology SCHOOL STUDENTS CANNABIS SURVEY

This survey is part of a study that aims to examine the cannabis related knowledge, attitudes and patterns of use of over 3500 Western Australian high school students.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Do not put your name on this survey! Your answers are confidential. Your questionnaire cannot be identified and no school staff will see the answers.

Please complete this survey using the 2B pencil provided. Do not use a pen



- Answer the questions by marking the appropriate box or boxes.
- Do **not** use any pens or ball-point pens.
- If you wish to change your answer, erase fully. Then mark the correct answer.
- Do not mark the area outside the box.

**MARK BOX LIKE THIS:**         **NOT LIKE THIS:**

**Part A: Demographics**

Please indicate your answer to the following questions by marking only ONE box.

1. What year are you in?     Year 9     Year 12
2. How old are you?     13     14     15     16     17     18 or over
3. What sex are you?     Female     Male

4. What is your postcode?

(Indicate your postcode by writing it in the boxes provided and then fill in the corresponding box below) →

*Example postcode:*

POSTCODE			
6	0	3	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**POSTCODE**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DO NOT FOLD OR DEFACE THIS SHEET IN ANY WAY

### Part B: Knowledge About Cannabis

Please read each statement and indicate if you feel it is true, false or you are unsure by marking only ONE box like this. ■

		True	False	Unsure
5.	Most 13 year old students in WA have tried cannabis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	Cannabis use increases the risk of developing a mental illness in some people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	Weekly use of cannabis can reduce a student's ability to study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	Cannabis use can adversely affect a person's ability to drive a car.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	Young people who use cannabis weekly are no more likely to try other illegal drugs than those who have never used cannabis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	Smoking cannabis can increase the chance of developing a respiratory problem (eg. asthma, cancer).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11.	People who use cannabis regularly can become dependent on the drug.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12.	Over 70% of Year 12 students use cannabis at least once a month.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.	Currently in WA, it's legal for an adult to have a small amount of cannabis for personal use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14.	Currently in WA, it's illegal to grow a cannabis plant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15.	Currently in WA, an adult would not usually get a criminal record for possession of a small amount of cannabis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16.	Currently in WA, being convicted of a cannabis offence can affect a person's ability to find employment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17.	Currently in WA, a person on premises where they know cannabis is being smoked is committing an offence even if they do not smoke it themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18.	Currently in WA, the penalty for the possession of a bong/pipe for smoking cannabis is less than the penalty for possession of a small quantity of cannabis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your answer to the following questions by marking the box or boxes like this. ■

19. Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to a person under 18 caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for their personal use? (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal caution by a police officer         | <input type="checkbox"/> Referral to juvenile justice team                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance at a cannabis education session | <input type="checkbox"/> Summons to appear in juvenile court                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal conviction recorded               | <input type="checkbox"/> A fine  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance at children's drug court        | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding ticket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Penalty                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Six months sentence in a juvenile detention centre          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compulsory drug treatment                  |  |

20. Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis for their personal use? (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal caution by a police officer         | <input type="checkbox"/> A fine  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance at a cannabis education session | <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance at drug court                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal conviction recorded               | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding ticket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summons to appear in court                 | <input type="checkbox"/> No penalty  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Six months jail sentence                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Compulsory drug treatment                                   |

21. Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught growing a cannabis plant? (Mark as many boxes as apply)
- Formal caution by a police officer
  - Attendance at a cannabis education session
  - Criminal conviction recorded
  - Summons to appear in court
  - Two year jail sentence
  - A fine
  - Appearance at drug court
  - Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding ticket
  - No penalty
  - Compulsory drug treatment
22. Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to an adult caught selling a small amount of cannabis? (Mark as many boxes as apply)
- Formal caution by a police officer
  - Attendance at a cannabis education session
  - Criminal conviction recorded
  - Summons to appear in court
  - Two year jail sentence
  - A fine
  - Appearance at drug court
  - Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding ticket
  - No penalty
  - Compulsory drug treatment
23. Currently in WA, according to the law which of the possible consequences can apply to a person under 18 caught selling a small amount of cannabis? (Mark as many boxes as apply)
- Formal caution by a police officer
  - Attendance at a cannabis education session
  - Criminal conviction recorded
  - Appearance at children's drug court
  - No Penalty
  - Two year sentence in a juvenile detention centre
  - Referral to juvenile justice team
  - Summons to appear in juvenile court
  - A fine
  - Receive an infringement notice similar to a speeding ticket
  - Compulsory drug treatment
24. If the law regarding cannabis were *prohibition with civil penalties*, it would mean that: (Mark only ONE box)
- It would be legal and no penalties would apply
  - It would be illegal and a fine would apply, but no criminal conviction
  - It would be illegal and a criminal conviction would be recorded
  - Unsure

**Part C: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use**

These statements are about attitudes to cannabis. There are no right or wrong answers. For each statement, mark the ONE box that corresponds with how you feel like this. ■

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion/ unsure
25.	I would be concerned if my friends were using cannabis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	I would use cannabis if a friend offered it to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	I would use cannabis if someone at a party who I didn't know offered it to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	People my age usually have a good time when affected by cannabis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	There are harms that can result from using cannabis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	I would accept a lift in a car where the driver was affected by cannabis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Monthly use of cannabis by people my age is not dangerous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Most people who use cannabis will go on to use more dangerous drugs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33.	The benefits of using cannabis outweigh the harms and risks associated with its use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Part C: Attitudes Towards Cannabis Use - continued**

These statements are about attitudes to cannabis. There are no right or wrong answers. For each statement, mark the ONE box that corresponds with how you feel like this. ■

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion/ unsure
34.	Most laws are worth obeying.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
35.	Police deserve respect for their role in maintaining law and order.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
36.	Cannabis should be legally available for people over 18.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
37.	Cannabis should be legally available for people under 18.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
38.	The current cannabis laws, which apply to adults in WA, deter people under 18 from using cannabis.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
39.	The sale of a small amount of cannabis by one adult to another should be a criminal offence.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
40.	The sale of a small amount of cannabis by an adult to a person under 18 should be a criminal offence.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
41.	The sale of a small amount of cannabis by a person under 18 to another person under 18 should result in an appearance at the juvenile justice court.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
42.	It should not be illegal for a person under 18 to give a small amount of cannabis to a friend.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
43.	Driving a car while affected by cannabis should be a criminal offence.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
44.	It is very unlikely that a person my age would be caught by the police for using cannabis.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)
45.	There has been a lot in the media recently about cannabis law.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(U)

Please indicate your answer to the following questions by marking the box or boxes like this. ■

46. I think people my age who use cannabis do so for the following reasons: (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Makes them feel good            | <input type="checkbox"/> Because it is easy to get | <input type="checkbox"/> Relieves stress           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because they are curious        | <input type="checkbox"/> It's better than alcohol  | <input type="checkbox"/> Because it is a safe drug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because their friends use it    | <input type="checkbox"/> To have fun               | <input type="checkbox"/> It's cheap                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure from friends to use it | <input type="checkbox"/> To experiment             | <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom/ something to do  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To appear 'cool'                | <input type="checkbox"/> Because everyone uses it  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                     |

47. Do you believe that the possession of small amounts of cannabis by an adult for personal use should be a criminal offence in WA resulting in a criminal record? (Mark ONE box only)

- Yes  Go to question 48      No  Go to question 49

48. In WA, the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use by an adult should be illegal and result in a criminal record because: (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It stops people from using it    | <input type="checkbox"/> It helps police to do their job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There are harmful health effects | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It leads to other drug use       |  |

Go to Part D

49. In WA, the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use by an adult should not be illegal and result in a criminal record because: **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**

- Cannabis is not a harmful drug
- It would reduce involvement in organised crime
- Private use of small amounts doesn't hurt others
- Police can focus on more serious offences
- Less people will use to defy authority
- Many people use cannabis
- Cannabis use is a health issue not a law enforcement issue
- No worse than alcohol or tobacco
- Criminal charge too harsh
- Will stop people using harder drugs
- Other

**Part D: Patterns of Use**

This section asks you a series of questions about your non-use or use of alcohol, cannabis and other drugs. **Please indicate your answer to the following questions by marking the box or boxes like this ■**

50. Have you ever been offered or had the opportunity to use following: **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Other illegal drugs (eg. speed, ecstasy, trips)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

51. In your lifetime how many times have you used the following? **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Never	1 - 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	11 - 30 times	31 + times
a) Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Other illegal drugs (eg. speed, ecstasy, trips)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

52. In the last 12 months how many times have you used the following? **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Never	1 - 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	11 - 30 times	31 + times
a) Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Other illegal drugs (eg. speed, ecstasy, trips)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

53. In the last 4 weeks how many times have you used the following? **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Never	1 - 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	11 - 30 times	31 + times
a) Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

54. In the last week how many times have you used the following? **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Never	1 - 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	11 - 30 times	31 + times
a) Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

55. In the last 12 months have you used any of the following at the same time: **(Mark only ONE box for each a, b and c)**

	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Alcohol and cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cannabis and other illegal drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Alcohol and other illegal drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

56. In the last 12 months which of the following activities did you undertake while affected by cannabis or alcohol alone or in combination? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- |                                     | Alcohol only             | Cannabis only            | Cannabis and alcohol     |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Drove a car                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Verbally abused someone          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Physically abused someone        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Had sex that you later regretted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Had unprotected sex              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Caused damage to property        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Stole property                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Created a public disturbance     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) None of the above                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
57. In the last 12 months which of the following problems have you experienced due to your use of alcohol or cannabis alone or in combination? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- |  | Alcohol only             | Cannabis only            | Cannabis and alcohol     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) School work has suffered                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Had a disagreement or fight with friends              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Had a disagreement or fight with boyfriend/girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Been in trouble with parents                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Been in trouble with the police                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Been in trouble with school principal or teacher      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Been verbally abused                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Been physically abused                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) None of the above                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
58. In the last 12 months which of the following health problems have you experienced due to your use of alcohol or cannabis alone or in combination? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- |  | Alcohol only             | Cannabis only            | Cannabis and alcohol     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Memory loss                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Difficulty breathing after exercising | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Felt anxious                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Felt confused                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Asthma attacks                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Decreased ability to concentrate      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Other health effects                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Physical co-ordination was affected   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Vomiting                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j) Hangover                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k) Passing out                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l) Spinning out or dizziness             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m) None of the above                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
59. In the last 12 months how many times were you a passenger in a car where the driver was affected by alcohol or cannabis alone or in combination? **(Mark only ONE box for each of a, b and c)**
- |                         | Never                    | 1 - 2 times              | 3 - 5 times              | 6 - 10 times             | 11 - 30 times            | 31 + times               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Alcohol              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Cannabis             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Alcohol and cannabis | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

60. Have you ever tried cannabis? (Mark only ONE box)

No  **Go to question 61** Yes  **Go to question 63**

61. Do you think you will ever try cannabis? (Mark only ONE box)

Yes  No  Unsure

62. What best describes your reasons for not using cannabis? (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's illegal                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents don't want me to use it                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My friends don't use it                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't afford it                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned that parents might find out        | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't get it   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with how it might affect my health | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't need it  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can have a good time without using it        | <input type="checkbox"/> Am concerned about moving on to more dangerous drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am concerned about becoming addicted to it   | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer to use other illegal drugs                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer to use alcohol                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned about being caught by police       |   |

**If you have never used cannabis go to question 76**

63. At what age did you first try cannabis? (Mark only ONE box)

Under 10  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18 or over

64. How do you most commonly use cannabis? (Mark only ONE box)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke it in joints   | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat it                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke it from a bong | <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke it from a 'bucket' bong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke it from a pipe | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                         |

65. When you smoke cannabis do you usually mix it with tobacco? (Mark only ONE box)

Yes  No

66. Where do you use cannabis? (Mark as many boxes as apply)

- |   |  |                                  |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Own home         | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends house                   | <input type="checkbox"/> School  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parties          | <input type="checkbox"/> Public places / parks / beaches | <input type="checkbox"/> In cars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerts / raves | <input type="checkbox"/> Clubs and pubs                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |

67. How did you first obtain cannabis? (Mark only ONE box)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grew my own                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Bought it (from friend / family) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bought it (from dealer / supplier)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Given it (by family / friend)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Given it by someone other than family or friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                            |

68. Where do you usually obtain cannabis now? (Mark only ONE box)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grow my own                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Buy it (from friend / family) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buy it (from dealer / supplier)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Given it (by family / friend) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Given it by someone other than family or friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                         |

69. How easy is it to obtain cannabis now? (Mark only ONE box)

- |   |                                    |                                 |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very easy      | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy      | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult |                                 |

70. Which of the following drugs have you ever been offered when obtaining cannabis?

- (Mark as many boxes as apply)
- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> LSD (trips)                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Heroin                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cocaine                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tranquillizers / sleeping pills / benzos | <input type="checkbox"/> Mushrooms                | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-depressants                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Ecstasy                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Have not been offered any other drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amphetamines / speed / dexies            | <input type="checkbox"/> Painkillers / analgesics | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                 |

71. Who do you usually use cannabis with? **(Mark ONE box only)**
- On my own                       Close friends                       Other
- People I don't know well       Brother or sister
- Parent                               Other relative
72. With regard to supplying cannabis which of the following applies to you? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- I have never supplied cannabis     I have given it to friends / family     I have sold it to friends / family
- I have given it to others             I have sold it to others
73. What best describes your reasons for using cannabis? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- Makes me feel good               Because its cheap                       To be 'cool'
- Pain relief                               Because its less dangerous           Pressure from friends
- Experimenting/ curiosity             than other drugs                       Because its safe
- Because my friends use it           For fun/ to have a good time         Because its easy to get
- Because everyone uses it           Relieves stress                         Other
74. Do you still use cannabis? **(Mark ONE box only)**
- No  **Go to question 75**      Yes  **Go to question 76**
75. If you no longer use cannabis what best describes your reasons for not using it? **(Mark as many boxes as apply)**
- Didn't like the effect                       Was only experimenting
- It was affecting my health               Concerned about how it might affect my health
- Can't afford it                               Can't get it
- Was concerned school would find out     Concerned with how it might affect my school work
- School found out                         Concerned my parents would find out
- Parents found out                         Parents don't want me to use it
- Was concerned about being caught by the police     Was caught by police
- My friends don't use it                       Was putting on weight
- Have a good time without using it         Am concerned about becoming addicted
- Am concerned about moving on to more dangerous drugs     Prefer to use alcohol
- Prefer to use other illegal drugs         Other
76. If civil penalties, like a fine for speeding in a motor vehicle, applied to cannabis use would you? **(Mark ONE box only)**
- Not use it                               Use it as often as I do now
- Try it                                       Use it more often than I do now
- Use it less often than I do now           Unsure
77. If cannabis use by adults were made legal, so using it was no longer an offence of any kind, would you? **(Mark ONE box only)**
- Not use it                               Use it as often as I do now
- Try it                                       Use it more often than I do now
- Use it less often than I do now           Unsure

Thank you for completing this questionnaire



**APPENDIX 3:  
PILOT FEEDBACK FORM**



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**STUDENT FEEDBACK ON QUESTIONNAIRE****Please circle your response**

1. Was the survey      a) Too long  
   b) OK

2. If you thought the survey was too long please indicate which questions should be left out

---

**3. Please circle your response**

- Were the instructions      a) Easy to follow  
   b) Difficult to follow  
   c) OK

4. If you thought the instructions were difficult to follow do you have any suggestions to make them easier?

---

---

**Please circle your response**

5. Was the format of the survey      a) OK  
   b) Too crowded  
   c) Confusing

6. What can be done to improve the format?

---

---

**Please circle your response**

7. Were the questions      a) Easy to understand  
   b) OK  
   c) Difficult to understand

8. Please indicate which questions were difficult to understand and why

---

---

**Please circle your response**

9. Did you have any concerns about answering any of the questions

a) Yes

b) No

10 If you answered yes to question 9 please indicate which questions caused you concern and why

---

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11. Please look at questions 58, 59, 60, 64, 75 and 76. Are there any other choice of responses that should be offered?

58

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59

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60

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64

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75

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76

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2. Are there any other questions that need other choices of responses?

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13. Other comments about the questionnaire

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Thank you for your feedback



**APPENDIX 4:  
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**





NATIONAL DRUG RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
4TH LEVEL, 679 MURRAY STREET WEST PERTH

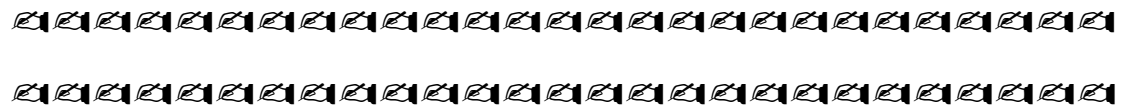
PHONE: 9426 4214

PARENTAL and STUDENT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM  
IMPACT OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGE ON CANNABIS USE, KNOWLEDGE  
AND ATTITUDES TO CANNABIS AND THE LAW OF SCHOOL STUDENTS

The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), Curtin University of Technology has received funding to conduct research to determine the extent to which changes in legislation and regulations for minor cannabis offences applying to adults affect the cannabis use, knowledge and attitudes to cannabis and the law of school students. (School) has been randomly selected to be involved in the research study. The research involves surveying approximately 2000 Western Australian year 9 students and approximately 1400 year 12 students. The survey asks a series of questions about each respondents current non-use or use of cannabis; attitudes to cannabis use and the law; knowledge of the laws and the consequences of being apprehended; impact of the perception of the laws on non- use, use, intention to use and context of use; drug market factors. We would like all year nine and year twelve students from (school) to participate in the survey this year (2002). The surveys are anonymous therefore at no time will the identity of your child be known. A researcher from NDRI will administer the surveys and no school personnel will have access to the surveys. Your child will be free to decline to answer any questions and you or your child will be free to or to withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time. During the analysis the surveys will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with only the NDRI researcher having access. After the surveys have been analysed they will be shredded.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions regarding the survey please contact **Fiona Farrington (94264214)**.

If you **do not consent** to your child's involvement to participate in the survey please complete the tear off section below and return it to **(teacher)** by **(date)**.



**I do not consent to** \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name)  
involvement in the survey that examines the impact of legislative change on cannabis use, knowledge and attitudes to cannabis and the law of school students.

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX 5:  
FOCUS GROUP QUESTION AND PROBE SCHEDULE**



## Focus Group Interview Schedule

Initial Question:

What level of priority does drug education have at your school?

**Prompts:** What makes you think that? How do you feel about that?

Domains	Content	Prompts
<b>Student knowledge -impact on use</b>	Issues Positive outcomes Negative outcomes Potential solutions /opportunities Supports	<p>How much time is spent teaching students about cannabis law?</p> <p>How well do you think students understand the current laws?</p> <p>How relevant do you think students believe the current laws are to them?</p> <p>How do you think students understanding of the current law impacts on their use? (If necessary other prompts encourage, deter)</p> <p>What do you believe impacts on students use?</p> <p>Are there any other issues regarding how the current laws impact on student knowledge or use?</p> <p><b>Brief discussion on proposed scheme for cannabis to ensure understanding</b></p> <p>How do you think the proposed scheme will affect students understanding and knowledge of cannabis law?</p> <p>What can be done to maximise students understanding of the proposed schemes?</p> <p>What support structures are required for this to occur?</p> <p>How relevant do you think students will believe the proposed scheme is to them?</p> <p>How do you think the proposed scheme might impact on student use? (If necessary, other prompts encourage, deter)</p> <p>Are there any other issues regarding how the proposed scheme might impact on student knowledge or use?</p>

<b>School Drug Education</b>	Issues Positive outcomes Negative outcomes Potential solutions /opportunities Supports	<p>How do the current laws affect educating young people about cannabis in the classroom? (+ves, -ves, if necessary)</p> <p>Are there any other issues regarding how the current laws impact on classroom based cannabis education?</p> <p>How do you think the proposed scheme will affect classroom based cannabis education (+ves, -ves, if necessary, ie. opens communication, HR, may be seen to be condoning use etc)</p> <p>What is required at the school level to ensure that students receive education about the proposed scheme?</p> <p>What supports are required for this to occur?</p> <p>How has the media coverage of the cannabis law debate impacted on classroom-based cannabis education?</p> <p>Are there any other issues regarding how the proposed scheme might impact on classroom based cannabis education?</p>
<b>School Drug Policy</b>	Issues Positive outcomes Negative outcomes Potential solutions /opportunities Supports	<p>How does your school drug policy reflect the current cannabis laws?</p> <p>How do the current laws influence the development of a schools drug policy and how they respond to incidence of use at school?</p> <p>Are there any other issues regarding how the current laws impact school drug policy?</p> <p>How will schools' drug policies change to reflect the proposed scheme?</p> <p>How will the proposed scheme influence schools drug policy and how they respond to incidence of use at school?</p> <p>What is required at the school level to ensure that the school drug policy and how schools respond to incidence of use reflect the proposed scheme?</p> <p>What supports are required for this to occur?</p> <p>Are their any other issues regarding how the proposed scheme might impact on school drug policy?</p>

<b>Students seeking help</b>	<p>Issues Positive outcomes Negative outcomes Potential solutions /opportunities Supports</p>	<p>How do you think the current laws affect students seeking help if they are concerned about their cannabis use? Are there any other issues regarding how the current laws impact students seeking help for their cannabis use?</p> <p>How do you think the proposed scheme will affect students seeking help if they are concerned about their cannabis use? What can be done to maximise schools' ability to support students seeking help? What support structures are required for this to occur? Are there any other issues regarding how the proposed scheme might impact students seeking help for their cannabis use?</p>
<b>Parents</b>	<p>Issues Positive outcomes Negative outcomes Potential solutions /opportunities Supports</p>	<p>How do you think the current laws impact on the level of comfort parents have regarding the cannabis education schools provide? (+ve, -ve impacts, if necessary) Are there any other issues regarding how the current law impacts on the level of comfort parents have regarding classroom-based cannabis education?</p> <p>How do you think the proposed scheme will impact on the level of comfort parents have regarding the cannabis education schools provide? (+ve, -ve impacts, if necessary) What can schools do to ensure that the proposed scheme does not impact negatively on the level of comfort parent have with the school's cannabis education? What support structures are required for this to occur? Are there any other issues regarding how the proposed scheme might impact on the level of comfort parents have regarding classroom-based cannabis education?</p>





**APPENDIX 6:  
ONE PAGE SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME**



**Principles & Goals of the proposed scheme:**

The proposal recognises that cannabis, like other drugs has the capacity to cause harm. The proposed scheme should:

- Not encourage use, nor patterns of use which may increase harm;
- Reduce the adverse social costs of being apprehended for a minor cannabis offence;
- Move cannabis supply away from large-scale, criminal, commercial suppliers;
- Free up the police and the courts to deal with more serious crimes.

**Key features of the proposed scheme\*:**

- The possession of cannabis for personal use will remain illegal.
- Possession by an adult of up to 15 grams of cannabis would attract a penalty of \$100.
- Possession by an adult of more than 15 but not more than 30 grams of cannabis would attract a penalty of \$150.
- Possession by an adult of not more than 2 cannabis plants would attract a penalty of \$200. No more than 2 plants per household will be eligible for an infringement notice.
- Offenders will be required to pay their penalty in full within 28 days, or complete a specified cannabis education session within the same period. Those who fail to do this will incur a debt to the state and be dealt with by the Fines Enforcement Registry.
- Juveniles will not be eligible for an infringement notice under the proposed scheme. Cautions currently apply for juveniles for some drug offences. It is recommended that the juvenile justice system have the option to require that, to be eligible for a caution, juveniles, and their families, receive appropriate counselling and support.
- Those eligible for an infringement notice must supply evidence as to their identity (eg. driver's licence) to reinforce payment by the due date.
- The hydroponic equipment industry will be regulated to eliminate those from the industry who have links with organised criminal organizations.
- Suppliers of smoking paraphernalia, such as water pipes or 'bongs' will be regulated. They will be required display information about cannabis, its health effects and the laws, and will not permitted to sell to juveniles.
- Possession of hash or hash oil, which are more potent forms of cannabis, will not be eligible for an infringement notice.
- Police will seize cannabis found and will have the power to seize hydroponic equipment used for the cultivation of cannabis.
- Police will lay criminal charges against those persons who attempt to flout the intention of the scheme, for example by engaging in cannabis supply, even if they are only in possession of amounts otherwise eligible for an infringement notice.
- Comprehensive education will be provided for the general public, school children and cannabis users about the health effects of cannabis and the laws which apply to it, emphasizing the point that cannabis possession and use remains illegal.
- The scheme will be subject to ongoing monitoring and regular review to ensure that it meets its goals. (Correct as at May 2002)