



Alcohol, Tobacco & other
Drugs Council Tas Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

Roundtable meets in Hobart to discuss the implications of cannabis decriminalisation

5 May 2014

The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council (ATDC) is convening a roundtable forum in Hobart on Tuesday 6 May 2014 to discuss an issue of drug law reform, specifically, the decriminalisation of cannabis. The roundtable will bring together a range of local, national and international experts.

ATDC CEO, Jann Smith, expects the roundtable to highlight key issues and challenges in developing policy in this area. "Bringing together a broad range of experts and opinion leaders is the starting point for the ATDC to inform our future policy development based upon the most contemporary evidence and views available. At the conclusion of the roundtable the ATDC will produce a report that will inform the ATDC Board and our discussions with political leaders in coming years".

The roundtable will hear from Dr Beau Kilmer, a researcher from California, focused on drug policy issues in the United States and abroad. He will speak about global drug policy in relation to decriminalising the use of cannabis, including the experiences from the USA.. Dr Kilmer will be visiting Tasmania for a week as a guest of the ATDC and to present at the ATDC's 2014 Conference at the Hotel Grand Chancellor on the 7th and 8th May. Dr Kilmer's work covers everything from the risks and benefits of using cannabis, to describing the current laws around the use of cannabis in the USA and internationally. He has discussed at length the costs and benefit of legalisation and considered how cannabis legalisation can personally impact parents, heavy users, medical users, employers and even drug traffickers.

Dr Alex Wodak, an addiction specialist from NSW, will also attend the roundtable forum. Dr Wodak is well known for his impressive career in the alcohol and drug field and for initiatives such as establishing one of the first needle and syringe programs in NSW. Dr Wodak has completed extensive research on global drug policy trends and reform agenda's at an international level. Dr Wodak argues for a new approach to end the war on drugs, he says "Half a century of a drug policy relying primarily on drug law enforcement has failed to curb the demand and supply of illicit drugs in Australia. Adverse consequences of this approach have seen increased death, disease, crime and corruption"

In relation to cannabis, Dr Wodak argues that we first need to look at the taxation and regulation of cannabis in Australia and in doing this also look at improving the quality of drug treatment.

"Regulating and taxing cannabis and diverting these funds into treatment for cannabis dependent people would ultimately save our country millions."

Mr Mick Palmer, former Australian Federal Police Commissioner will also participate in the discussion. According to Mr Palmer current prohibitionist based drug policy has failed miserably and must be re-considered, "Why, in the face of a poorly-performing policy, should Australia not attempt to benefit from the international drug policy experience, when we try to learn from international policy advances in so many other areas."

Other local identities including, Greg Barns, Dr David Jackson and representatives from relevant government departments will also be involved in the roundtable. A consumer representative and a youth voice will also participate in the discussion. Airlie Ward, senior ABC journalist will facilitate discussion throughout the day.

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