



## SENATOR DAVID LEYONHJELM

Leader of the Liberal Democrats

### MEDIA RELEASE

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## Leyonhjelm leads the way on legal cannabis

Senator David Leyonhjelm attended the Uniting Church's drug summit in Sydney today, reinforcing the Liberal Democrats' longstanding policy of decriminalising recreational drug use in Australia.

"I believe we have reached a level of maturity in this country where we can move beyond policies based on fear or disapproval and embrace an evidence-based medical and harm-minimisation strategy, as sophisticated societies have done elsewhere," Senator Leyonhjelm said.

"While I congratulate the Uniting Church, Richard Branson and the group of enlightened health and law professionals who have convened today's event, I do not believe their policy goes far enough.

"The Liberal Democrats will continue to push for the full legalisation of any drug shown to be less harmful than alcohol or tobacco, and the decriminalisation of all other drugs."

On Monday, the Senate of the Australian Parliament will debate Senator Leyonhjelm's *Removing Commonwealth Restrictions on Cannabis Bill*.

"An estimated 35 per cent of Australians admit to having used cannabis at some point in their lives, so it is pretty clear the policy of prohibition is not working," he said.

"Attitudes have changed over the last couple of decades and few now accept the claim that cannabis is addictive like narcotics, or that it is a pathway to drugs more addictive than alcohol or tobacco.

"While not totally innocent, cannabis has a cleaner rap sheet than alcohol. Nobody gets into a fight, gambles irresponsibly, engages in domestic violence or destroys property as a result of smoking cannabis.

"Apart from keeping it out of the hands of minors and preventing adverse effects on others – as we attempt to do with alcohol and tobacco – there is no longer any justification for maintaining laws that make possession, use or supply of cannabis illegal."

A Parliamentary Budget Office costing commissioned by the Liberal Democrats in 2016 found that legalising recreational cannabis would contribute an additional \$300 million in GST revenue each year.

"We also know our policy would free up police and court resources for more important matters," Senator Leyonhjelm said.

"While the Greens continue to make a rowdy song and dance about decriminalising cannabis, they have yet to introduce any legislation into the Australian Parliament to make this happen. I will be urging all my fellow Senators to support my bill on Monday."

A factsheet on the Liberal Democrats' Bill compared to the Greens' recent announcement is attached.

# Factsheet

## Leyonhjelm Bill compared to Greens' policy

Liberal Democrats	Greens
Policy to legalise cannabis since the party's formation in 2001.	Policy to legalise cannabis since April 2018.
Bill introduced and subject to Inquiry. Costing obtained and released in 2016.	No Bill, Inquiry or costing to date.
No cannabis excise. Officials admit the high tobacco excise is prompting a growing criminal black market.	Propose a cannabis excise, which will ensure that a criminal black market in cannabis continues.
<p>Bill is deregulatory and respects federation.</p> <p>Removes all Commonwealth offences and civil penalty provisions for dealings with cannabis.</p> <p>Allows States to maintain bans if they wish. Leaves regulation to the states, as per alcohol and tobacco regulation. Bill constitutional.</p>	<p>Regulatory, centralised approach favoured.</p> <p>Unlikely to remove all Commonwealth offences and civil penalty provisions for dealings with cannabis.</p> <p>Extensive Commonwealth intervention and apparent over-riding of the States, without any head of power in the Constitution.</p>
No Commonwealth agency.	Establish a Commonwealth agency to be a monopoly wholesaler and licence growers and retailers.
No bias against efficient private production.	Desire to avoid 'big cannabis'.
No plain packaging requirement or ban on advertising, noting clear evidence that plain packaging has failed to reduce smoking.	Plain packaging and a ban on advertising, which will undermine business efforts to develop a reputation for quality.
No dictating of how States may regulate.	Requirement for service-of-cannabis training and certificates, despite problems with service-of-alcohol certificate requirements.