



SENATOR DAVID LEYONHJELM

Leader of the Liberal Democrats

MEDIA RELEASE

6 December 2018

Welfare drug testing hypocritical

Liberal Democrats Senator David Leyonhjelm will not be supporting the government's move to introduce mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients unless his amendments to include alcohol and a concentration threshold are adopted.

The [Social Services Legislation Amendment \(Drug Testing Trial\) Bill 2018](#) seeks to introduce a pilot drug testing regime for Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients in Canterbury-Bankstown in New South Wales, Logan in Queensland and Mandurah in Western Australia.

Senator Leyonhjelm said if the government was genuine about helping jobless people become employable, it would not be testing for just illicit drugs and would add alcohol to the list instead.

"If the trial only tests for illegal drugs, this proves the Government just wants to expand its war on drugs and demonise those whose drug of choice is illegal," Senator Leyonhjelm said.

"Drug testing, if it is to occur, should only target substances that affect the employability of welfare recipients. Alcohol use can reduce a welfare recipient's employability but there is no evidence regular cannabis use affects people's ability to secure and hold down a job."

Senator Leyonhjelm said the bill in its current form would penalise welfare recipients after a mere 'presence' of drugs was detected, not when there is a concentration sufficient to cause impairment that is noticeable or would hinder employment.

Welfare recipients who test positive could incur financial penalties and face mandatory referrals for medical examinations and treatment for drug addiction.

"Having a faint trace of a drug in your system doesn't mean you're not serious about getting a job and should not be the basis for penalty," he said.

"People can use drugs without abusing drugs, so returning a positive drug test doesn't mean you should be required to undertake medical examinations and treatment, particularly when the taxpayer is footing the bill for the examinations and treatment."

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