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Local MLA Welcomes New Cannabis Legislation

Dr Mike Nahan, the Member for Riverton has welcomed Premier Colin Barnett's announcement to introduce legislation to repeal the Cannabis Control Act 2003.

Dr Nahan said the cannabis-related legislation was the first in a series of steps the State Government would take to send a clear anti-drugs message to the community and toughen penalties for people who broke the law through drug-related offences.

"The State Government recognises that illicit drug use is a significant problem that affects the lives of users, their families, friends and the wider WA community," Dr Nahan said.

"It remains a top priority for this Government to revoke the previous Labor Government's soft-on-cannabis laws and introduce tougher penalties for drug possession, cultivation and for the sale of drugs to children."

According to the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, approximately one in five Australians stated they had the opportunity to use cannabis in the past year and declared that cannabis was 'easy' to obtain.

Research shows that cannabis use can lead to a variety of health and mental health problems, including respiratory issues and cancer risk, abnormalities in reproductive functioning and schizophrenia.

"The Government believes a tougher approach against drugs is necessary to send a clear message not to use drugs. But we also recognise the existence of a criminal record has a serious impact on a person's future employment prospects," Dr Nahan said.

"Under the Government's proposed laws, a person convicted of minor cannabis possession offences will be able to apply to have a conviction spent after three years, provided they are not convicted of further offences during that period."

"This approach ensures minor drug offenders who demonstrate they are prepared to take responsibility and rehabilitate themselves are given an opportunity to turn their lives around."

Dr Nahan said that prior to the State election, the Liberal Party released the election policy '*Tackling Illicit Drugs in our community: Law Enforcement*', to fight Labor's soft-on-drugs approach.

The new cannabis-related laws will:

- prosecute the possession of more than 10g of cannabis. This is a reduction from the previous Labor government's stance where prosecution only occurred when it was more than 30 grams;

- result in subsequent offences for possession being prosecuted as criminal offences;
- prosecute people for cultivating cannabis plants;
- make it illegal for cannabis smoking implements to be sold to anyone, including adults. Currently it is only an offence to sell these implements to children; and
- increase fines for the sale of smoking implements. The new laws will allow for fines of up to \$5,000 for sale to an adult and up to \$10,000 for sale to a minor. Bodies corporate will be fined equivalent to five times these amounts.

“Illegal drugs ruin lives and shatter families. I believe these initiatives will crackdown on the plague of illicit drugs in our State and will provide protection for our community,” said Dr Nahan.

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