

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We aim to update our valued partners and the workplace (generally) about issues that face our industry; drugs and alcohol in the workplace. We highlight the latest trends, what concerns are filtering through to the shop floor, and help to educate those who strive for a safer and harm free workplace.

*Integrity Sampling is Australia wide, with 130 staff and technicians. We are Australia's leading drug and alcohol testing company. We service the transport, warehousing, manufacturing, building, construction, logistics, aviation, marine, mining, forestry, automotive and allied industries, performing in excess of 50,000 tests annually.*

## SPECIAL NEWSLETTER

### LEGALISING CANNABIS



#### IS DOPE, HOOCH, GRASS, SMOKE, WEED NOW LEGAL?

After years of lobbying by doctors, cancer patients and parents of sick children, medical cannabis has finally been legalised. On the 24 February 2016 the Australian parliament passed new national laws paving the way for the use of medicinal cannabis by people with painful and chronic illness, with Victoria becoming the first state in Australia to legalise the use of medicinal cannabis.

The Queensland Government has already announced a trial to treat patients with epilepsy with medicinal cannabis.

By year's end, most of the other states or territories will have followed suit. The legislation enables the manufacture, supply and access to medicinal cannabis products.

But, what does this mean to your workplace? What do you need to know to ensure that you are not misled by individuals that choose to flaunt the law and feign an illness in order to consume cannabis at work? This special newsletter is designed to help you become better aware....



## WHO CAN USE CANNABIS LEGALLY?

It has to be stressed from the outset, that medicinal cannabis should be treated like any other drug. That is, it will only be dispensed by a doctor or specialist in the course of treating seriously ill patients. There is a misconception that legal medicinal cannabis will open the door for a free-for-all to smoke cannabis whenever they choose. This is very wrong, tight restrictions will apply.

It is fair to say you already know your workforce well. To that end you would be aware of the staff members that suffer illnesses. Medicinal cannabis may be prescribed as a pain management tool. A doctor might prescribe cannabis to someone suffering from epilepsy, one of the ailments where cannabis has shown to be effective. Other illnesses where cannabis might be prescribed is for chemotherapy treatment, brain tumours, and chronic pain. All serious illnesses that would be known to yourself or staff members.



It is important to know that the usage of medicinal cannabis will most likely be administered in the form of a capsule or liquid (taken a teaspoon at a time), as prescribed by a doctor. Victoria's Health Minister Jill Hennessy has said access to the drug — available in a variety of forms, including tinctures, oils, capsules, sprays and vapourisable liquids — would be rolled out gradually and eventually be made available to palliative care and those with HIV

It must be stressed that the use of cannabis for medical reasons will not be in the form of a roll-your-own joint, the methodology that is characteristic with smoking marijuana. Such activity, whether at work or on a break, will still remain illegal.

It's important to understand that the legalisation for the use of cannabis allows for the cultivation of the drug through a national licensing and permit scheme. It does not mean workers can grow their own cannabis for their own use, whether they have a serious health issue or not. The strand of medicinal cannabis used, is found to have specific properties that are helpful to specific illnesses or pain management. Home grown 'pot' is not part of the medicinal regime needed to help patients.

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## IS IT STILL ILLEGAL TO SMOKE DOPE?

In a word; 'yes'. Recreational cannabis cultivation and use remains illegal with state-based criminal laws still in place. Nothing will change there! All jurisdictions make it an offence to have any trace of an illicit drug in your system when you are driving.

It does not matter that your driving is exemplary or that the trace of drugs in your system is from a couple of puffs of a cannabis joint a few days earlier. Within the workplace, the same rules apply. That is, it is against workplace policy to be under the influence of cannabis whilst at work.



If in doubt, ask your employee to show proof his/her illness and documentation proving that they are on a medicinal cannabis program. Under the circumstances this would be a very legitimate request. Then, make an informed decision as to whether using medicinal cannabis might affect their work practices or place other employees in harms way. If in doubt contact our office hotline for immediate assistance.

## 1300 SALIVA

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## WORKPLACE DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

Due to the ambiguous nature of legalised medicinal cannabis **Integrity Sampling** would be pleased to update your existing policy, to ensure you are covered before any issues arrive. Just give us a call.

*Michael Wheeldon*

**Michael Wheeldon.**

Managing Director. Integrity Sampling

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