



# Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee

**Hearing date: 14 February 2025**

**Question taken on notice**

**Directed to:** Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

**Received date:** 6 March 2025

## 1. **The CHAIR, p. 44-45**

### **Question asked:**

Sorry, is that the Aboriginal Legal Service's? Can you comment on the negative impacts in relation to the commercial cannabis market? ...

**The CHAIR:** ...I am happy for you to take that on notice if you can expand on what the pitfalls were and what we can learn from that area in relation to the commercial cannabis market.

### **Response:**

VALS' submission referred to the many documented impacts that the legalisation of cannabis and commercial cannabis markets in North America has had on marginalised communities. This includes:

- the effects of failing to universally expunge and pardon the records of people who had previously been criminalised for sale and/or possession of cannabis;
- reforms that have enabled large corporations to take over commercial market (which is bad policy design that privileges those with capital while excluding groups who have been historically targeted by criminalisation) and this further engrains inequity in society; and
- large-scale commercialisation of the cannabis industry creating another industry lobby, 'Big Cannabis', that de-centres people in favour of profits in politics.

See below for one of the many academic sources which go into these impacts in greater detail\*.

For the reasons outlined in our submission, VALS is not concerned that the bulk of these issues will be replicated here due to the scope of the *Cannabis Bill 2023* being limited to decriminalising the small-scale growth and personal adult-use of cannabis. The Committee can be confident that this Bill is low risk but can lead to many positive impacts and should support the passage of the Bill. However these impacts overseas are an important reminder that automatic expungement of related criminal

records, which VALS spoke to in our submission and I spoke to in my evidence, should be prioritised for inclusion in this Bill.

\* Adinoff, B., & Reiman, A. (2019). *Implementing social justice in the transition from illicit to legal cannabis*. *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 45(6), 673–688. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2019.1674862>