



VICTORIA POLICE

Office of the Assistant Commissioner
Eastern Region
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Our ref FF-152830

16 July 2021

Fiona Patten
Department of the Legislative Council
Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament of Victoria, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Chair

Legal and Social Issues Committee (the Committee) Inquiry into the Use of Cannabis in Victoria (the Inquiry)

Thank you for your email dated 7 July 2021 seeking additional data and information from Victoria Police on a number of matters of interest to the Committee following my appearance before the Committee on 29 June 2021.

Attached to this letter, Victoria Police has provided a response to the questions taken on notice in relation to recent studies referred to in Victoria Police's opening statement and the mental health impacts of cannabis use.

Unfortunately, Victoria Police is not in a position to provide the Committee with a response to the question taken on notice in relation to the financial resources spent on cannabis and cannabis related crime. Victoria Police does not routinely collect or hold this type of data and the organisation's financial data holdings do not allow for data regarding the resources spent on cannabis and cannabis-related crime to be extracted.

The Victoria Police contact for this matter is [REDACTED]
Department who can be contacted on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



Glenn Weir APM
Assistant Commissioner
Eastern Region

Attachment A

1. The Chair (Page no. 3)

The Chair requested you to forward recent studies by Meinhofer and by Chiu, Leung, Hall, which you referred to in your opening statement.

Victoria Police Response:

- Meinhofer, A., & Rubli, A. (2021). Illegal drug market responses to state recreational cannabis laws. *Addiction*.
- Chiu, V., Leung, J., Hall, W., Stjepanović, D., & Degenhardt, L. (2021). Public health impacts to date of the legalisation of medical and recreational cannabis use in the USA. *Neuropharmacology*, 108610.

2. Ms CROZIER (Page no. 9)

... in terms of the mental health impacts and the presentations to our emergency departments, particularly in relation to cannabis use for psychotic episodes with young people? Have you got any data on that? Have the police got any data on that?

Victoria Police Response:

- Victoria Police does not hold data on *'the mental health impacts and presentations to our emergency departments, particularly in relation to cannabis use for psychotic episodes with young people'*. We recommend that this query be directed to the Victorian Department of Health.
- However, Victoria Police can provide data on mental health transfer events, noting that caveats and limitations apply as described below.
- Mental health transfers refer to instances where an individual is apprehended under section 351 of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. This legislation allows for a person to be apprehended if the police officer or protective services officer is satisfied that the person appears to have a mental health issue and, because of the person's apparent mental health issue, the person needs to be apprehended to prevent serious and imminent harm to themselves or to another person, and police arrange for the person to be transferred to a hospital emergency department for a mental health assessment.
- It is important to note that Victoria Police does not code mental health transfers to emergency departments with determining factors such as drug use. This is because Victoria Police members are not clinicians and are not required to exercise any clinical judgement as to whether the person has a mental illness and/or what might be driving the individual's behaviour. Police (and protective services officers) only need to be satisfied that a person appears to be experiencing a mental health issue based on the person's behaviour and appearance and any other relevant information including information from the family and carer if appropriate. Noting this qualification, Table 1 provides the total number of mental health transfers performed each year by Victoria Police over the past six years. Table two provides a breakdown of these transfers by age category. Please refer below.

Table 1 - Number of Section 351 - Mental Health Transfer events recorded in Victoria between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2020

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	% change from 2018/19
No. of psychiatric crisis events recorded (Section 351-Mental Health Transfers)	9,365	10,431	11,014	13,706	15,452	18,096	17.1%

Table 2 - Number of Section 351 - Mental Health Transfer events recorded in Victoria between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2020 by age group

Age Group	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	% change from 2018/19
0-9 Years	11	10	14	21	29	41	41.4%
10-17 Years	889	894	1,099	1,515	1,765	2,098	18.9%
18-24 Years	1,950	2,028	2,120	2,658	2,971	3,464	16.6%
Over 25 Years	6,467	7,441	7,705	9,425	10,586	12,402	17.2%
Unspecified/ Unknown*	48	58	76	87	101	91	-9.9%
Total (ALL)	9,365	10,431	11,014	13,706	15,452	18,096	17.1%

*includes data where either age is missing or unspecified.