

Cannabis use declining

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This letter, written by Associate Professor Simon Lenton, of the National Drug Research Institute, refutes the suggestion by police union president Mike Dean that cannabis use is spiralling out of control in WA. The new WA State Government "plans to repeal the Cannabis Infringement Notice scheme". Professor Lenton writes that "WA data from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggests the proportion of West Australians who used cannabis in the past year dropped from 18.6 per cent in 2001, to 13.7 per cent in 2004, the year the CIN scheme came into being, and has since dropped to 10.8 per cent in 2007". However, he states that he is not claiming this is a consequence of the CIN scheme, but rather, the decline follows a national trend that began before the scheme's introduction. He says, "more evidence-based public discussion about the health harms of cannabis, combined with more negative views towards smoking generally, are likely to explain the drop, particularly among the youth." Lenton writes, "cannabis use should primarily be treated as a health issue". He emphasises that recriminalising cannabis use is not likely to reduce use but will instead act as a deterrent to users seeking help for cannabis-related problems.