

ncpic e-zine

december 2009/january 2010

national cannabis
prevention and
information centre

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what's
new in
cannabis?

NCPIC is sending its set of Young People's postcards to over 900 schools around the country in February. The postcards are designed to promote nine, real-life stories by young people and encourage thought and discussion about issues associated with cannabis use, including cannabis and driving, 'greening out' and dependence. To view the stories and their accompanying questions and answers, please visit the following URL: <http://ncpic.org.au/youngpeople/stories/>



communications report

Paul Dillon

National Communications Manager

2009 was a big year for the NCPIC Communications Team and we are anticipating even more exciting projects and output in 2010.

Without a doubt one of the most anticipated events of the year is the 'Cannabis: It's Not Our Culture' Art Exhibition. This is to be held on March 30 at CarriageWorks in Sydney. The pieces of artwork have now all been completed by members of the seven communities involved in the project from around the country. All the artworks are very different, with one of them from Victoria being a piece of glass sculpture. Each of them tells their own story about the effect that cannabis has had on their community and how they have attempted to deal with the issue.

The Walungurru (Kintore) community, west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, have provided two pieces of art – one of which we have included above. This work was completed by a group of well-respected women from the community and depicts a healthy, safe community – free from cannabis, alcohol and other drugs. In discussions prior to completing the artwork, the women decided that rather than depict images of how cannabis robs them of culture and identity, they would paint something that reminds people of where their sources of strength come from. The painting includes images of families, local food, animals and plants, as well as the local mountain ranges – a source of strength, identity and women's and men's 'dreaming' and ceremony country – *Pulikutjarra* (Two Hills) and *Ngintaka* (Perentie).



Kintore, NT

'Ngurra Palya Kanyintjaku' – 'Looking after our Home'

Artists: Pelita Michaels Napurrula, Clara Napurrula, Ruby-Lee Napurrula & Josephine Napurrula

"The image embodies traditional knowledge of the Kintore community. It was created with the consent of the custodians of the community. Dealing with any part of it for any purpose that has not been authorised by the custodians is a serious breach of the customary laws of the Kintore community and may also breach the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)". For enquiries about this and other permitted reproduction and use of the image, please contact the Kintore Community.

All the artworks, as well as their accompanying stories, will be included on the 'Cannabis: It's not our culture' section of the NCPIC website. A series of twelve factsheets, designed specifically for those who work with Indigenous communities, will also be made available for download, or sets of

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research publications

Relevant publications examining issues to do with cannabis that have been published in the last month include the following:

Chédebois, L., Régner, I., van Leeuwen, N., Chauchard, E., Séjourné, N., Rodgers, R., & Chabrol, H. (2009).

Relative contributions of acculturation and psychopathological factors to cannabis use among adolescents from migrant parents. *Addictive Behaviors* 34, 1023-1028.

Comelli, F., Bettoni, I., Colleoni, M., Giagnoni, G., & Costa, B. (2009).

Beneficial effects of a cannabis sativa extract treatment on diabetes-induced neuropathy and oxidative stress. *Phytotherapy Research* 23, 1678-1684.

De Backer, B., Debrus, B., Lebrun, P., Theunis, L., Dubois, N., Decock, L., Verstraete, A., Hubert, P., & Charlier, C. (2009). Innovative development and validation of an HPLC/DAD method for the qualitative and quantitative determination of major cannabinoids in cannabis plant material. *Journal of Chromatography – Analytical Technologies in the Biomedical and Life Sciences* 877, 4115-4124.

Dekker, N., Schmitz, N., Peters, B.D., van Amelsvoort, T.A., Linszen, D.H., & de Haan, L. (2009). Cannabis use and callosal white matter structure and integrity in recent-onset schizophrenia. *Psychiatry Research* 181, 51-56.

Di Forti, M., Morgan, C., Dazzan, P., Pariante, C., Mondelli, V., Marques, T.R., Handley, R., Luzzi, S., Russo, M., Paparelli, A., Butt, A., Stilo, S.A., Wiffen, B., Powell, J., & Murray, R.M. (2009). High-potency cannabis and the risk of psychosis. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 195, 488-491.

Grant, J.D., Lynskey, M.T., Scherrer, J.F., Agrawal, A., Heath, A.C., & Bucholz, K.K. (2009). A cotwin-control analysis of drug use and abuse/dependence risk associated with early-onset cannabis use. *Addictive Behaviors* 35, 35-41.

Guindon, J. & Hohmann, A.G. (2009). The endocannabinoid system and pain. *CNS and Neurological Disorders – Drug Targets* 8, 403-421.

Hancox, R.J., Poulton, R., Ely, M., Welch, D., Taylor, D.R., McLachlan, C.R., Greene, J.M., Moffitt, T.E., Caspi, A., & Sears, M.R. (2009). Effects of cannabis on lung function: A population-based cohort study. *European Respiratory Journal* 35, 42-47.

Jayanthi, S., Buie, S., Moore, S., Herning, R.I., Better, W., Wilson, N.M., Contoreggi, C., & Cadet, J.L. (2009). Heavy marijuana users show increased serum apolipoprotein C-III levels: Evidence from proteomic analyses. *Molecular Psychiatry* 15, 101-112.

Karschner, E.L., Schwilke, E.W., Lowe, R.H., Darwin, W.D., Pope, H.G., Herning, R., Cadet, J.L., & Huestis, M.A. (2009). Do delta9-tetrahydrocannabinol concentrations indicate recent use in chronic cannabis users? *Addiction* 104, 2041-2048.

Katz, G., Durst, R., Shufman, E., Bar-Hamburger, R., & Grunhaus, L. (2009). Cannabis abuse and severity of psychotic and affective disorders in Israeli psychiatric inpatients. *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 51, 37-41.

Kelly, B.D., O'Callaghan, E., Waddington, J.L., Feeney, L., Browne, S., Scully, P.J., Clarke, M., Quinn, J.F., McTigue, O., Morgan, M.G., Kinsella, A., & Larkin, C. (2009). Schizophrenia and the city: A review of literature and prospective study of psychosis and urbanicity in Ireland. *Schizophrenia Research* 116, 75-89.

Lakhan, S.E. & Rowland, M. (2009). Whole plant cannabis extracts in the treatment of spasticity in multiple sclerosis: A systematic review. *BMC Neurology* 9, 59.

Mariani, J.J., Haney, M., Hart, C.L., Vosburg, S.K., & Levin, F.R. (2009). Effects of research setting on observed depressive symptoms in marijuana users. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 37, 431-434.

McLaren, J.A., Silins, E., Hutchinson, D., Mattick, R.P., & Hall, W. (2009). Assessing evidence for a causal link between cannabis and psychosis: A review of cohort studies. *International Journal on Drug Policy* 21, 10-19.

Nestor, L., Hester, R. & Garavan, H. (2009). Increased ventral striatal BOLD activity during non-drug reward anticipation in cannabis users. *Neuroimage* 49, 1133-1143.

Price, C., Hemmingsson, T., Lewis, G., Zammit, S., & Allebeck, P. (2009). Cannabis and suicide: Longitudinal study. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 195, 492-497.

Reiman, A. (2009). Cannabis as a substitute for alcohol and other drugs. *Harm Reduction Journal* 6, 35.

Richardson, T. & Gallagher, A. (2009). Comment on Hides et al. – Cannabis use and psychotic-like experiences. *Schizophrenia Research* 116, 98.

Schwilke, E.W., Schwoppe, D.M., Karschner, E.L., Lowe, R.H., Darwin, W.D., Kelly, D.L., Goodwin, R.S., Gorelick, D.A., & Huestis, M.A. (2009). Delta9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), 11-hydroxy-THC, and 11-nor-9-carboxy-THC plasma pharmacokinetics during and after continuous high-dose oral THC. *Clinical Chemistry* 55, 2180-2189.

Selvarajah, D., Gandhi, R., Emery, C.J., & Tesfaye, S. (2009). Randomized placebo-controlled double-blind clinical trial of cannabis-based medicinal product (Sativex) in painful diabetic neuropathy: Depression is a major confounding factor. *Diabetes Care* 33, 128-130.

Sheer, A.J., Gorelick, D.A., Collins, C.C., Schroeder, J.R., Heishman, S.J., Leff, M.K., & Moolchan, E.T. (2009). Interest in marijuana treatment programs among teenage smokers and nonsmokers. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 37, 421-425.

Simons-Morton, B., Pickett, W., Boyce, W., ter Bogt, T.F., & Vollebergh, W. (2009). Cross-national comparison of adolescent drinking and cannabis use in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands. *International Journal on Drug Policy* 21, 64-69.

Spano, M.S., Fadda, P., Frau, R., Fattore, L., & Fratta, W. (2009). Cannabinoid self-administration attenuates PCP-induced schizophrenia-like symptoms in adult rats. *European Neuropsychopharmacology* 20, 25-36.

Stanger, C., Budney, A.J., Kamon, J.L., & Thostensen, J. (2009). A randomized trial of contingency management for adolescent marijuana abuse and dependence. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 105, 240-247.

Tashkin, D.P. (2009). Does cannabis use predispose to chronic airflow obstruction? *European Respiratory Journal* 35, 3-5.

commentary on research relative contributions of acculturation and psychopathological factors to cannabis use among adolescents from migrant parents – a comment on Chédebois and colleagues (2009)

Tracey Wright

Substance use among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) adolescents has been linked to difficulties in the acculturation process. Chédebois and colleagues (2009) recently conducted a cross-sectional study examining the respective contributions of acculturation orientations and ethnic identity to cannabis use in CALD adolescents. The study sampled 292 French secondary school students born in France, who had at least one foreign parent. Acculturation

orientations reflect individuals' positive or negative attitudes towards their original culture (that of the foreign parent) and the dominant culture of the host country. Five acculturation orientations were measured: integration (positive attitudes towards both cultures); individualism (rejection of both cultures, and preference for defining oneself as an individual rather than a group member); assimilation (having negative attitudes towards the culture of origin, but positive attitudes towards the host culture); separation (positive attitudes towards the culture of origin, but negative attitudes towards the host country) and marginalization (negative attitudes towards both cultures). The authors found that integration, individualism and assimilation were negatively associated with the frequency of current cannabis use, suggesting that these acculturation strategies may serve as protective factors from cannabis use. An association between cannabis use and other acculturation strategies (separation and marginalization) was not found. These

results indicate that in France the design of therapeutic interventions targeting adolescents from a CALD community may benefit from inclusion of therapeutic strategies focusing on the development of integration, individualism, and assimilation acculturation orientations. As Australia is culturally distinct from France, it is possible that acculturation orientations may interact differently with frequency of cannabis use within adolescent CALD populations. Therefore the role of acculturation orientations may be worthy of consideration in future research addressing treatment of adolescent cannabis use in Australian CALD communities.

Chédebois, L., Régner, I., van Leeuwen, N., Chauchard, E., Séjourné, N., Rodgers R., & Chabrol, H. (2009). Relative contributions of acculturation and psychopathological factors to cannabis use among adolescents from migrant parents. *Addictive Behaviors* 34, 1023-1028.



Each issue we will examine some of the cannabis-related stories that have received media attention across the country. The headlines are listed below in bold, with a short summary and/or commentary regarding the content of the news story beneath.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of a particular story, please contact Clare Chenoweth at c.chenoweth@unsw.edu.au

drug crime is a cause for alarm

Wangaratta Chronicle: November 30, 2009

This editorial reports a 60 per cent rise in drug-related offences in the Wangaratta area over the past year. The writer claims that the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) says "one in three households nationwide uses marijuana

– which is legal in the ACT and South Australia."

In fact, the ADF website states that "in one third of Australian households marijuana has been used." This reflects use which may have occurred at any time in the past, and is certainly not as alarming as the editorial's assertion that one third of Australian households use cannabis currently. In addition, the editorial claims that cannabis use is legal in certain Australian states and territories, which is incorrect. Cannabis use is illegal in all Australian states and territories.

Jan Copeland

rockhampton drug scare: dealers lace marijuana

The Morning Bulletin: December 1, 2009

A Rockhampton cannabis user has claimed that cannabis dealers in the area are lacing cannabis with other substances, including methamphetamine. According to the unnamed 32 year-old, who is a regular cannabis user, dealers are lacing cannabis with other substances due to the lack of supply of cannabis in the area because of a recent police crackdown and Schoolies Week. The man reported that he had been rushed

to hospital with heart attack-like symptoms, after using cannabis that he said was laced with methamphetamine. He is also concerned that people with pre-existing health conditions who use cannabis may be particularly vulnerable. Police and health authorities in the area said that there was no evidence of an increase in laced cannabis to confirm the man's claims.

treatment program rescues a life in flux

Sunshine Coast Daily: December 12, 2009

This article reports on a recent, successful graduate of the Queensland Magistrate's *Early Referral into Treatment* (QMRT), a pilot program for people dependent on drugs, whose crimes are directly related to substance use. The 12-16 week drug treatment program is for people on bail awaiting sentencing and the main aim of the program is to break the revolving door of crime and punishment that comes from drug dependence. Since its establishment, 508 people have entered the program and 204 have graduated. One program participant, Derek, was referred to the program after a police raid on his home had uncovered cannabis. As a result of

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completing the program, he has achieved 16 weeks of non-drug use and said that “a big attraction of the QMRT program was that the magistrate looked more favourably on offenders who graduated.”

the gorilla in the cupboard

Esperance Express: December 22, 2009

The negative effects of cannabis use are described in this article. Effects mentioned include impaired driving ability, respiratory problems, lung cancer, dependence and mental health issues.

cannabis users now cop more cautions

Daily Telegraph: December 28, 2009

Data regarding the rate of cannabis cautions given by police, obtained from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), is discussed in this article. It is stated that “cautions related to cannabis possession or use were up 27 per cent, with police issuing 4170 warnings between June 2008 to June 2009.”

Baillieu's bond to ban the bong

Sunday Age: January 3, 2010

The Victorian Opposition has said that bongs will be made illegal in Victoria if they win the next election later this year. Opposition Leader, Ted Baillieu claims this will “send a clear message to young people that cannabis is dangerous and harmful.” He mentions the mental health effects of cannabis and believes that by allowing the sale of bongs in Victoria, “young people and families will continue to suffer from the damaging effects of cannabis.”

workplace drug testing boom sparks fears of false results

Sunday Age: January 10, 2010

This article explores the complexities around workplace drug testing and includes comment by Deputy Director of the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, Dr Ken Pidd. Dr Pidd “warned there was little evidence to show testing reduced drug-related workplace harm, and that a lack of regulation meant many tests could not guarantee accurate results.” Cannabis and amphetamines are said to be the most commonly detected drugs in the workplace.

drink-driving beats violence

Herald Sun: January 14, 2010

A recent Victorian survey which asked participants to rank “controversial behaviours from least to most acceptable,” found that driving after using cannabis “made the top ten.”

radio summary

3AW (Melbourne): 7.30 News, January 15, 2010

There has been widespread radio and print media coverage about a cannabis-based mouth spray, *Sativex*, which could be used in Australia to help patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). Victorian Government Health Minister Daniel Andrews' spokesperson said “a doctor from the Royal Melbourne Hospital Neurology Department is expected to seek approval from the hospital's ethics committee to use *Sativex* to treat the pain of MS.”

all going to pot for Kiwis

MX (Sydney): January 18, 2010

According to this article, “pot dens, where people can smoke, buy or even study the drug, are poised to open throughout New Zealand this year.” Dakta Green, the founder of the first “cannabis connoisseurs club” plans to expand the club into every major city in New Zealand.

trial aims to nip cannabis use in bud

Southern Courier: January 19, 2010

NCPIC's web-based cannabis treatment study, *Reduce Your Use*, received media coverage in this article. The “Australian-first online and interactive program will reach more users than traditional means of support.” NCPIC's Dr Sally Rooke is quoted in the article, “We want to reach most people who experience problems with cannabis and who don't seek help because of their concerns about stigmatisation or that it's not convenient for them.” Techniques taught in the program such as ‘urge surfing’ are described by Dr Rooke: “It's called urge surfing because the urge [to use cannabis] comes in waves; you reach the top of the wave where the urge is strongest but if you wait a few minutes the urge passes.” For those interested in participating in this study, please email Dr Rooke at reduceyouruse@med.unsw.edu.au

safer skunk

New Scientist: January 23, 2010

The link between cannabis use and psychosis, (particularly for those who are young, use cannabis and have a predisposition for schizophrenia), is acknowledged in this article. However it goes on to describe that the variance among types of cannabis such as ‘skunk’ and street cannabis, in terms of their levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), can influence whether people experience psychosis or not. ‘Skunk’ contains high levels of THC but no CBD, making it riskier for those with a predisposition to schizophrenia. This is due to CBD being thought to counteract THC's psychosis-inducing qualities. In view of this, the Beckley Foundation plans to “analyse different strains of cannabis for their THC and CBD content” to inform the development of medicinal cannabis and hopefully make street cannabis safer.

While it is known that it is the THC in cannabis that can induce psychotic symptoms among some cannabis users, the ratio of THC to CBD (if any) that might ameliorate this risk is unknown. The notion that this is “safer” cannabis because of a theoretical reduction, with no evidence-base, of only one aspect (psychosis) of the risk associated with its use is rather premature. For further information on cannabinoids, see the following NCPIC factsheet at: <http://ncpic.org.au/workforce/alcohol-and-other-drug-workers/cannabis-information/factsheets/article/cannabinoids>

Jan Copeland

one-man cannabis van raises queries of legality

Sydney Morning Herald: January 26, 2010

This article covers the activities of Tony Bower's “medicinal cannabis dispensary” run from the boot of his van in Nimbin. Mr Bower has been distributing “25-millilitre vials of his therapeutic cannabis tincture free to anyone who can produce a medical certificate confirming their condition.” The article goes on to discuss the various legal issues both in Australia and around the world surrounding the use of such a substance.

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is 'Spice' the taste of things to come?

Products marketed under the 'Spice' brand, and often sold as incense, have been monitored through the early-warning system since early 2008. Packaging information claims that these are a blend of plant or herbal materials (as many as 14 ingredients).¹ But, recent tests have shown some batches also to contain synthetic cannabinoids. Up to October 2009, JWH-018 and eight other synthetic cannabinoids had been identified in 'Spice' products in Europe. These ingredients do not feature in the products information and may therefore be consumed unknowingly.

In 2009, almost half (48%) of the 115 online retailers surveyed were offering 'Spice'. While these were based in 14 European countries, the largest number was located in the UK (42%), and significant numbers in Romania (15%), Ireland (7%) and Latvia (7%). 'Spice' was also found to be available in 'head' or 'smart' shops – commercial outlets selling 'legal highs' – in at least nine EU Member States.

Concerns over synthetic cannabinoids have led a number of countries to take legal action to ban or otherwise control 'Spice' products and related compounds (Germany, Estonia, France,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland and Sweden). At least 27 herbal smoking blends have recently been found marketed online as alternatives to 'Spice', using a wide variety of names (e.g. 'Smoke', 'Sence').

Commenting on the issue, EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Gotz said: 'Attempts to circumvent drug controls by marketing unregulated substitutes are not new. What is new is the wide range of substances now being explored, the aggressive marketing of products that have been intentionally mislabelled, the growing use of the Internet, and the speed at which the market reacts to control measures. If "Spice" is a taste of things to come, Europe will need to ensure that its responses are adequate to tackle this growing challenge.

1. See EMCDDA 'Spice' report at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers>

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Is 'Spice' the taste of things to come? *Drugnet Europe 68* (Lisbon: EMCDDA, 2009), pp. 2.

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youths turn away from drugs

West Australian: January 28, 2010

A survey of West Australian young people aged between 18-30 conducted by the newspaper, *The West Australian*

and HBF, has found that "almost 60 per cent opposed the use of cannabis, up from 48 per cent in 2008." Professor Steve Allsop of the National Drug Research Institute commented that "overall illicit drug use had declined in the past decade, particularly of cannabis and amphetamines, but a marked decline in ecstasy use was yet to occur."

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communications report

these invaluable resources will be able to be ordered through the NCPIC site. We are also extremely excited that we will be printing a number of the pieces of artwork as posters that organisations will be able to order for free, once again via the online order form.

Apart from our targeting of Indigenous communities, the other group that we have worked extremely hard to reach is young people. It is acknowledged that it can be very difficult to engage this often 'hard-to-reach' group. It is important to note that 'young people' are not a homogeneous group and in relation to cannabis information, we have identified that we need to provide very different levels of information and resources for different groups. Thus far, the NCPIC Communications Team has focussed on developing a range of prevention materials, specifically for those who have not yet used cannabis, or those who are concerned about friends or relatives who may be experimenting or considering use.

One of our most successful strategies has been the development of competitions targeting school-based young people – the Poster and Short Film Competitions. This year we will continue with these, this time asking students to think about the effect that cannabis has on educational attainment. If previous years are anything to go by, we'll see some fantastic ideas!

Best wishes,

Paul Dillon

National Communications Manager



NCPIC is a consortium led by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and is an Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing initiative

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