

# ncpic e-zine

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national cannabis  
prevention and  
information centre

## Cannabis: It's not our culture

Exhibition at Eveleigh's CarriageWorks



Artists and community liaison people at the exhibition

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what's  
**new** in  
cannabis?

### what's new in cannabis?

NCPIC has launched a new website for its Indigenous project, *Cannabis: It's not our culture*. The website features original artworks and accompanying stories from seven remote and urban Indigenous communities, as well as free resources for Indigenous health care service providers and posters of the artworks. These can be ordered free from our online order form. The project features solution-based, community-driven approaches to issues caused by cannabis use in the communities. [www.notourculture.org.au](http://www.notourculture.org.au)

### director's report

Jan Copeland (PhD)  
(Professor/Director, NCPIC)

We're proud to announce the safe delivery of the first stage of our 'Cannabis: It's not our culture' project with the Indigenous art exhibition at CarriageWorks in Sydney on 30 March 2010 to launch the project. The exhibition showcased a range of exciting artworks, including original paintings on canvas, lino print and a slumped glass and timber sculpture, from the seven urban and remote Indigenous communities across Australia that were chosen to be part of the project. NCPIC commissioned the artworks to reflect community-led, solution-based approaches to tackling cannabis issues in their communities. The communities that exhibited artwork were: Kintore (NT), Lockhart River (QLD), Thursday Island (QLD), Jubullum (NSW), Nowra (NSW), Griffith (NSW), and Geelong (VIC). This E-Zine has a photo

montage of the artworks, artists and the activities on the day.

The Hon Carmel Tebbutt, Deputy Premier of NSW and Minister for Health, opened the exhibition and Karla Grant from SBS' Living Black, Australia's premier Indigenous news and current affairs program, hosted the event. Over 120 invited guests attended the one-day exhibition, along with many of the artists and community liaison people that NCPIC worked with on the project.

In addition to the exhibition, NCPIC, in consultation with a range of key stakeholders, has created factsheet packs for Indigenous health workers that are available to order free-of-charge via the NCPIC website. A dedicated section of the website ([www.notourculture.org.au](http://www.notourculture.org.au)) features all of the artworks as well as their accompanying stories. These are hoped to encourage discussion within

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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:

- Auwärter, V., Wohlfarth, A., Traber, J., Thieme, D., & Weinmann, W.** (2010). Hair analysis for Delta9-tetrahydrocannabinolic acid A: New insights into the mechanism of drug incorporation of cannabinoids into hair. *Forensic Science International* 196, 10-13.
- Chabrol, H., Rodgers, R.F., Sobolewski, G., & van Leeuwen, N.** (2010). Cannabis use and delinquent behaviors in a non-clinical sample of adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors* 35, 263-265.
- Coghlan, M. & Macdonald, S.** (2010). The role of substance use and psychosocial characteristics in explaining unintentional injuries. *Accident, Analysis and Prevention* 42, 476-479.
- De Petrocellis, L. & Di Marzo, V.** (2010). Non-CB1, non-CB2 receptors for endocannabinoids, plant cannabinoids, and synthetic cannabimimetics: Focus on G-protein-coupled receptors and transient receptor potential channels. *Journal of Neuroimmune Pharmacology* 5, 103-121.
- Filbey, F.M., Schacht, J.P., Myers, U.S., Chavez, R.S., & Hutchison, K.E.** (2010). Individual and additive effects of the CNR1 and FAAH genes on brain response to marijuana cues. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 35, 967-975.
- Huestegge, L., Kunert, H.J. & Radach, R.** (2010). Long-term effects of cannabis on eye movement control in reading. *Psychopharmacology* 209, 77-84.
- Jungerman, F.S., Menezes, P.R., Pinsky, I., Zaleski, M., Caetano, R., & Laranjeira, R.** (2010). Prevalence of cannabis use in Brazil: Data from the I Brazilian National Alcohol Survey (BNAS). *Addictive Behaviors* 35, 190-193.
- Kalayasiri, R., Gelernter, J., Farrer, L., Weiss, R., Brady, K., Gueorguieva, R., Kranzler, H.R., & Malison, R.T.** (2010). Adolescent cannabis use increases risk for cocaine-induced paranoia. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 107, 196-201.

**Korver, N., Nieman, D.H., Becker, H.E., van de Fliert, J.R., Dingemans, P.H., de Haan, L., Spiering, M., Schmitz, N., & Linszen, D.H.** (2010). Symptomatology and neuropsychological functioning in cannabis using subjects at ultra-high risk for developing psychosis and healthy controls. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 44, 230-236.

**Macdonald, S., Hall, W., Roman, P., Stockwell, T., Coghlan, M., & Nesvaag, S.** (2010). Testing for cannabis in the work-place: A review of the evidence. *Addiction* 105, 408-416.

**Martín-Santos, R., Fagundo, A.B., Crippa, J.A., Atakan, Z., Bhattacharyya, S., Allen, P., Fusar-Poli, P., Borgwardt, S., Seal, M., Busatto, G.F., & McGuire, P.** (2010). Neuroimaging in cannabis use: A systematic review of the literature. *Psychological Medicine* 40, 383-398.

**Mata, I., Perez-Iglesias, R., Roiz-Santiañez, R., Tordesillas-Gutierrez, D., Pazos, A., Gutierrez, A., Vazquez-Barquero, J.L., & Crespo-Facorro, B.** (2010). Gyrfication brain abnormalities associated with adolescence and early-adulthood cannabis use. *Brain Research* 1317, 297-304.

**Nadulski, T., Bleck, S., Schröder, J., Bork, W.R., & Pragst, F.** (2010). 11-nor-Delta9-tetrahydrocannabinol-9-carboxylic acid ethyl ester (THC-COOEt): Unsuccessful search for a marker of combined cannabis and alcohol consumption. *Forensic Science International* 196, 78-84.

**van Hell, H.H., Vink, M., Ossewaarde, L., Jager, G., Kahn, R.S., & Ramsey, N.F.** (2010). Chronic effects of cannabis use on the human reward system: An fMRI study. *European Neuropsychopharmacology* 20, 153-163.

**Verweij, K.J.H., Zietsch, B.P., Lynskey, M.T., Medland, S.E., Neale, M.C., Martin, N.G., Boomsma, D., & Vink, J.M.** (2010). Genetic and environmental influences on cannabis use initiation and problematic use: A meta-analysis of twin studies. *Addiction* 105, 417-430.

## commentary on research testing for cannabis in the workplace: a review of the evidence – a comment on Macdonald and colleagues (2010)

Peter Gates

Workplace drug testing (WPDT) is implemented in a variety of workplaces with the primary goal of deterring drug use or increasing workplace safety. As Macdonald et al. (2010) identify, few empirical studies have explored the connection between WPDT implementation and the achievement of these goals. To address this issue they reviewed 20 years of publications regarding how cannabis use in particular, impairs work performance, or increases the risk of job accidents, and how WPDT might deter use among employees or reduce job accidents.

To determine how cannabis use affects work performance, the review highlighted the short-term effects of cannabis use on psychomotor skills (such as reduced perceptual and motor skills, and impairments in attention, decision-making, learning and short-term memory) and several papers on the associations between culpability in car crashes and cannabis use (responsibility risk was increased by 1.4 to 6.6 times, depending on dose). The authors concluded that cannabis use (particularly heavy use) negatively affects performance related to driving ability and so likely negatively affects performance in the workplace.

The review went on to determine the utility of WPDT in deterring employee cannabis use. In their review of cross sectional studies regarding the degree to which testing positive for drug use decreases over time in workplaces that introduce drug testing, WPDT was seen to be effective. A recent household survey confirmed these findings, showing a lower prevalence of drug use among workplaces that introduced WPDT compared to workplaces that had no WPDT. However, the authors warn that non-deterrent explanations for these findings are possible.

The review also assessed if cannabis use increases workplace accidents by investigating if long-term use results in cognitive deficit that is sufficient to be



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](mailto:c.chenoweth@unsw.edu.au)

### **'pot' use linked to psychotic disorders**

*Queensland Times: March 3, 2010*

Researchers at the University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute and School of Population Health "have found young adults who use cannabis from an early age are three times more likely to suffer from psychotic symptoms." The study, which followed 3800 people born in the early 1980s until now has revealed that "those who use cannabis for six or more years have a greater risk of developing psychotic disorders or the isolated symptoms of psychosis, such as hallucinations and delusions."

### **national calendar**

*Koori Mail: March 10, 2010*

NCPIC's Indigenous Music Competition continues to be featured in the National Calendar section of the Koori Mail. We hope this generates awareness about the competition and results in some great entries!

### **inquiry studies dope's impact**

*News Mail: March 12, 2010*

Bundaberg "residents are being asked to share their views on the best ways to address marijuana's impacts on the community." MP Lindy Nelson-Carr is chairing the parliamentary Social Development Committee "that will examine the risks of using cannabis and strategies to reduce its use." Ms Nelson-

Carr states in the article that "the risks to a user's mental and physical health; the risk of addiction; and the risk of cannabis acting as a gateway to other harmful substances will be investigated." She also highlights the "mounting evidence that cannabis use was associated with serious health risks and those were particularly significant for young people."

### **zero tolerance for drugs**

*Gympie Times: March 13, 2010*

This article about the dangers of driving while under the influence of both legal and illegal drugs mentions that police conduct "random roadside saliva tests for illegal drugs such as marijuana, speed, ice and ecstasy."

### **marijuana merchants: cannabis crops destroyed**

*Daily Telegraph: March 13, 2010*

Police have recently discovered numerous cannabis plants growing around Griffith. The article also discusses cannabis use trends and notes that Australia has "one of the world's highest rates of cannabis use". NCPIC was reported as saying that "while fewer people are smoking cannabis, long-term smokers are using more than eight to 10 cones a day."

### **the facts on marijuana**

*Mudgee Guardian & Gulgong Advertiser: March 15, 2010*

NSW Department of Health's website is featured in this article. The site has detailed health warnings and factsheets on illicit drugs including cannabis. Information about the effects of cannabis given on the site include warnings that "small amounts of cannabis can affect concentration, increase heart rate, cause red eyes, make you feel hungry, adversely affect balance and co-ordination and make you talkative." It goes on to describe the effects of large amounts of cannabis, including confusion, restlessness, excitability, anxiety and panic. Effects on memory and clarity of thought, along with impaired driving ability are also mentioned, amongst others.

### **drug use rising in north, say police**

*Townsville Bulletin: March 17, 2010*

Statistics from the Crime and Misconduct Commission's latest illicit

drug market assessment have shown a decrease in cannabis use in the Townsville area. This is not the case for ecstasy or cocaine, which have both risen significantly across Queensland between 2001-2007. Northern Region Drug Squad officer-in-charge Detective Senior Sergeant Mick Walker, however, believes cannabis use has risen in the Townsville area. CMC intelligence director Chris Keen says "Cannabis use may have decreased generally, but the health risks are still high and have been underestimated by the public." Despite cannabis traditionally being seen as a 'soft' drug, Keen says "use can lead to psychotic episodes and a significant level of criminality involved in the supply side of the market...". In addition, Keen states, "Our research shows that cannabis use in indigenous Cape York and Torres Strait Island communities is also increasing to the levels found in the Northern Territory communities where around 60 per cent of residents use the drug regularly." Senior Sergeant Walker explains the general approach they take to the drug-related issues in Townsville, "We concentrate our efforts on dealers and suppliers rather than users, because that is the most effective way to eradicate the problem."

### **new high in drug arrests**

*MX Sydney: March 18, 2010*

Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology report, *Australian crime: Facts and figures 2009* has shown that between 1996 and 2008 "overall drug arrests for cannabis and heroin fell by 24 per cent and 68 per cent." This is in comparison to amphetamine arrests, which "have more than quadrupled in the past 12 years."

### **working with young people**

*Castlemaine Mail: March 26, 2010*

Youth worker Gerry White, of the Uniting Church Youth Program in Castlemaine, Victoria, is concerned about the negative impacts of illicit drug use on young people in the area. Mr White believes "cannabis is doing a lot of harm to kids and their families in the area." He says "A lot of people think it is harmless, but it's not at all...if there are any underlying mental issues, cannabis tends to escalate them."

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**director's report**

Indigenous communities and assist workers in these areas to have an open and honest dialogue about some of the cannabis-related issues that are facing Indigenous people. We have already received a great response in ordering the beautiful posters and welcome the suggestions coming in for further factsheet topics and additional resource development.

I'd also like to thank once again the NCPIC staff who have worked so hard with the participating communities to bring this stage of the project to fruition: Paul Dillon, Clare Chenoweth, Morag Millington and John Howard.

It is NCPIC's aim to continue working with and strengthening its relationships with the seven Indigenous communities that participated in the exhibition

through a range of future initiatives that address cannabis use in these communities. It is hoped that their stories and the small community-based projects that they develop in the coming years will help other communities that are struggling to deal with the cannabis-related problems in their areas. We will also continue to develop culturally appropriate resources for those working with Indigenous Australians and make them widely available via our website.

To conclude on a baby note: this month has seen us farewell Carly Harris on maternity leave and we wish her and her family well in this exciting time of their lives. In turn, we welcome Tori Barnes who joins us as my EA during Carly's leave. She has already impressed us with her dedication by attending the exhibition before she commenced employment.

Best wishes,  
Jan Copeland



*Steve Singline of the City of Greater Geelong and artist Kerrie Black from Geelong*



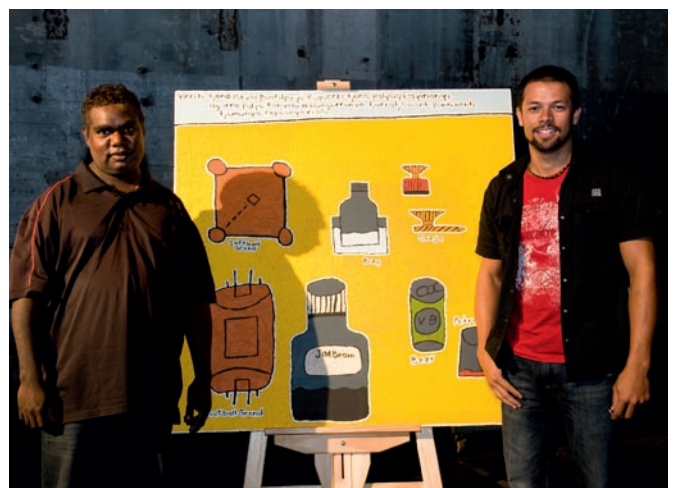
*Art teacher Peter Kemp of Tagai State College Secondary Campus and Thursday Island artist George Gabey*



*Deputy Premier and Health Minister of NSW Carmel Tebbutt with Kintore artists, Pelita, Ruby-Lee, Josephine and Clara Napurrula and Director of NCPIC, Prof Jan Copeland*



*Artist Deon Jones' family members*



*Kintore artist Michael Tjangala Gallagher with Jonathan Hermawan Tjapaltjarri*



Art teacher Agata Sosin-Parkin and Lockhart River artist Silas Hobson



Sid Barone of Griffith Aboriginal Medical Service with Deon Jones' artwork



Lockhart River artist Silas Hobson with Deputy Premier and Health Minister of NSW Carmel Tebbutt



Marilyn Smart of WAMINDA in Nowra, with Amanda McGowan's artwork



Jubullum artists Judy Torrens and Barbara Avery with Evelyn Robinson

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### media stories this issue

#### Californians take pot luck on drug referendum

*The Age: March 27, 2010*

California will hold a referendum about whether recreational cannabis use and taxing of sales of the drug will become legal. “Anti-drug campaigners say that this will lead to an explosion in the use of marijuana and harder drugs and fuel drug tourism.” Conflict with federal US laws which ban possession and sale of cannabis is another possible outcome. Should the referendum result in a change of law, only those over 21 years of age would be allowed to purchase one ounce of cannabis for personal use. Growing 25 square feet of cannabis in people’s gardens would also be allowed. However using cannabis in public places, school grounds or in front of children, would not be permitted, along with driving under the influence of the drug. Slightly over 50 percent of Californians in recent polls support legalising cannabis and taxing it, however there is concern that this will “definitely lower the perception of risk” and cannabis use among young people will rise significantly.

#### cannabis health woes for older users

*Sydney Morning Herald: March 29, 2010*

A National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) study has found a “tenfold increase in hospital treatment for cannabis poisoning or dependence among people in their 30s and 40s.” Despite cannabis use decreasing during the past decade, “the rate of hospital treatment rose” with treatment rates “highest among people in their 20s”. In addition, the largest increase in

treatment rates has been seen among older users “with those in their 30s only slightly less likely to seek help than younger people by 2007.” Despite those in their 20s being approximately “50 per cent more likely to have used cannabis during a one-year period compared with those in their 30s”, 20 percent of users in their 30s had “developed a daily habit, against about 15 per cent of the younger adults.” Professor Jan Copeland of NCPIC, notes that older users perceive cannabis as “a benign herb and natural...But when you are doing something every day you don’t realise the difficulties when you try to stop.” Professor Copeland also raised the point that young people these days are aware of the dangers of cannabis and fewer experiment with the drug, however “dedicated treatment programs were still needed for young people with a serious habit.”

#### art illustrates the terrible toll of cannabis use

*Richmond River Express Examiner: March 31, 2010*

Jubullum artists, Barbara Avery and Judy Torrens, whose artwork and story appeared in NCPIC’s Indigenous art exhibition, *Cannabis: It’s not our culture*, were featured in this article. The women’s story which accompanies their stunning artwork explains the impact cannabis has had on the community and the solutions the community found to address the issues. Their painting’s story is summarised in the article: The painting “depicts the darkness that came over their community as cannabis use increased and caused conflict, mental illness, loss of family values and the erosion of respect for elders. The painting shows the darkness lifting as community members use their leadership and knowledge of family and culture to guide and support those people affected by drug use.” This painting and those of the other Indigenous communities involved in the project can be viewed at this link: [www.notourculture.org.au](http://www.notourculture.org.au)

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### commentary on research

causal. The authors failed to find enough evidence to make this conclusion. To further investigate the association between cannabis use and workplace accident rates, the authors also reviewed papers that highlighted any differences in accident history between those who tested or reported positive or negative for cannabis use and between workplaces that had introduced WPDT and those that had not. The evidence was mixed and was convoluted by the impact of other factors such as the greater risk-taking of cannabis users, the inability to separate other safety improvements implemented during testing, the impact of other drug use and a need for large sample sizes given the wide array of causes of workplace accidents. The authors concluded that more research is needed to determine if cannabis use significantly increases accident risk or if WPDT decreases accident rates.

**Macdonald, S., Hall, W., Roman, P., Stockwell, T., Coghlan, M., & Nesvaag, S.** (2010). Testing for cannabis in the work-place: A review of the evidence. *Addiction* 105, 408-416.



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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