Social Supply of Cannabis in Australia

You are invited to participate in a research collaboration between the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, and the University of New England. This information sheet describes the project in straightforward language, or ‘plain English’. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding to participate.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

This study explores the ‘social supply’ of cannabis, where suppliers broker, facilitate or sell for little or no monetary gain to friends and friends of friends. The questionnaire asks about your experiences of using and gaining access to cannabis, your understandings of social supply, and your experiences with and attitudes towards cannabis laws.

What is the study for and why is it being done?

There are a number of ways of getting access to cannabis for recreational use including supply through everyday social activities and networks. Many people accessing cannabis are often otherwise law-abiding and not involved with organised drug dealers or drug dealing with its associated risks.

This study aims to provide a detailed account of the ways in which young adults (aged 18-30 years old) gain access to cannabis. In doing so the project will explore the impact of supply routes on different aspects of young people's lives, including access to other drugs, contact with the police, schooling and relationships with families and friends. Importantly, we are not looking to identify anyone or reporting this information to authorities.

We are pleased to announce that as of April 2013 this is a project supported by a grant from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing through the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF). The views expressed are the responsibility of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the Commonwealth.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

Every effort is made to collect the data, report on and disseminate the findings of the research in a way which is respectful of the interests of drug users. Yet, like any research, once the data are publicly available they can be used by others to support a variety of positions, some of which may be in agreement with, and others may be contrary to the views of the researchers or the research participants.

Overall we believe that services and policies regarding drug users are improved when informed by research such as this which draws on the knowledge and expertise of drug users themselves.

We can’t promise that you or others will get any benefit from taking part. However, by describing your experiences, you may help those interested in this area develop a better understanding of the social supply aspect of cannabis, and this might make a difference to the way the social supply of cannabis is thought about and acted upon. You will also receive $40 to cover your time and expenses.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

You will participate in a confidential interview with the researcher conducted at an agreed location. The interview is expected to last no longer than 1.5 hours. Parts of the interview will be audio-taped. No identifying information will be collected.
What are the risks associated with participation?

The interview includes questions about illegal behaviour. To ensure there are no legal risks to you, no identifying information will be collected.

The interview may prompt you to consider accessing treatment or information services. Appropriate referral information will be provided to you at the end of the interview.

What will happen to the information I provide?

This project does not request that you provide any identifying information. You will therefore remain anonymous. The data also remains confidential; it will only be viewed by the investigators. The information you provide will be kept in a secure environment for at least five years. The privacy of the information you provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed if required by law.

Please note that if specific information is supplied on activities dangerous to the public, the researchers would be obliged to notify appropriate authorities. It is therefore important that you do not mention your full name, or the name of anybody else, in the interview.

The results of the research will be collated and analysed in reports, journal articles and conference presentations. Any potentially identifying information that you provide, such as place or event names, will not be reported in these publications. You are welcome to view the progress of the research at our website or follow us on Twitter.

Website:  http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/research/sscannabis
Twitter:  @sscannabis

What are my rights as a participant?

Participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time during the interview, and the right to have any questions answered at any time. You can also choose not to answer any of the interview questions. Once you have completed your interview, your information cannot be identified, and therefore cannot be withdrawn.

Contact information

This research is being conducted by Monica Barratt and Simon Lenton of the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, and Cary Bennett and John Scott of the University of New England. If you have any questions or comments about this study, please contact Monica at m.barratt@curtin.edu.au or 03 8413 8514 or Cary at cbenne30@une.edu.au or 02 6773 2992.