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Cannabis and police diversion of juveniles and young people

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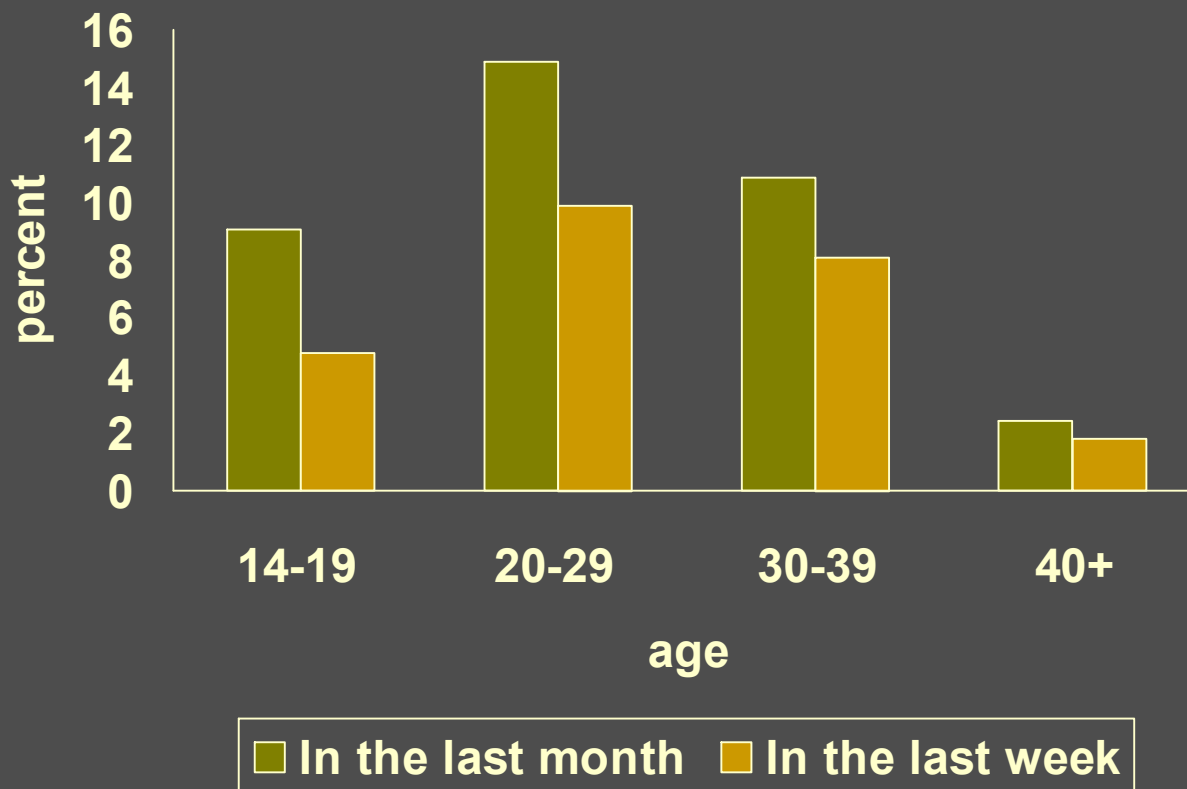
Overview

- What we know about cannabis use & youth
- Cannabis police diversion around Australia
 - Including research
- Discussion - future research issues

Cannabis use amongst juveniles and young people

- those most at risk are young frequent users
- cannabis dependence is a likely outcome for some regular users
- cannabis dependence is less likely than dependence to tobacco or other illicit drugs like heroin (Babor 2006)
- estimations include that up to 1 in 6 regular users become dependent on cannabis (Anthony 2006)
- national drug household survey (2004)
1.8 million used cannabis in last year.

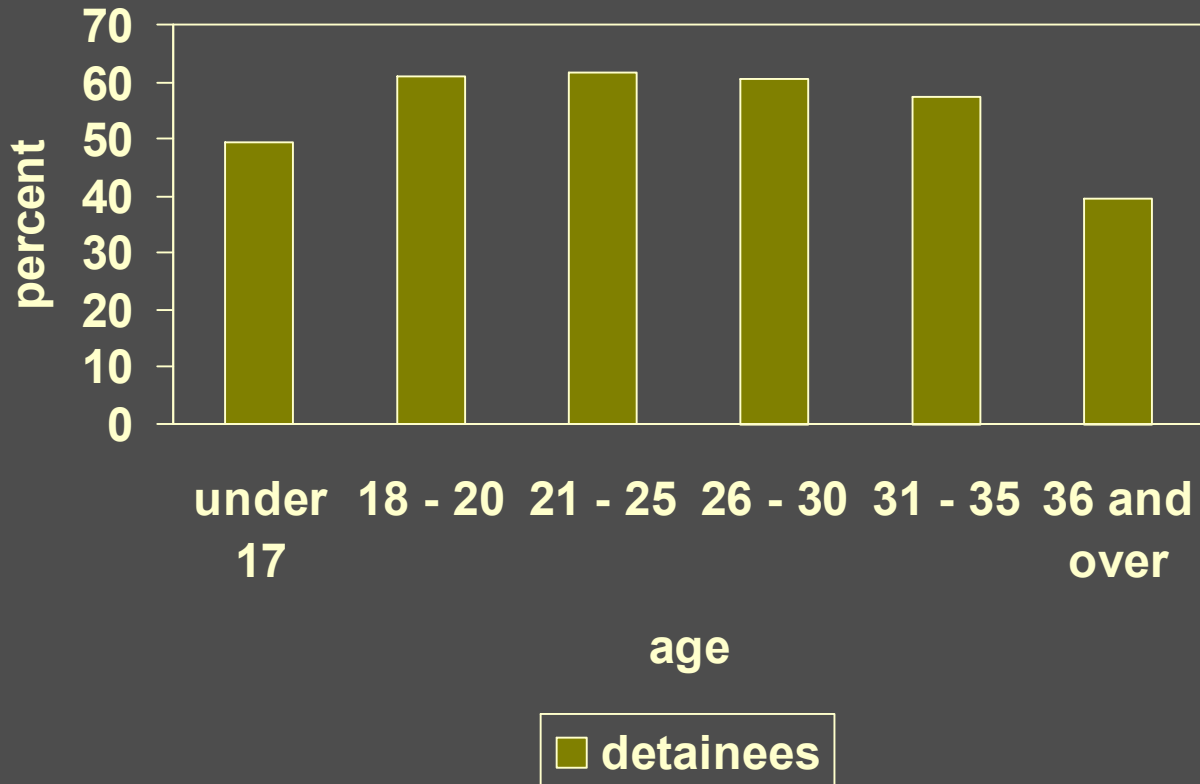
National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2004 – % of regular cannabis users



Police detainee sample – AIC DUMA 2006

test positive to cannabis – urinalysis

* juveniles only from NSW



Cannabis use and criminal justice interventions

Cannabis use is prevalent amongst those engaged in anti social and criminal behaviour

- Police diversion
- Court diversion
- Correctional program – diversion or treatment

Youth risk groups in treatment – high proportion of offenders

Treatment profile of Ted Noffs Foundation clients

(Acru, Copeland & Howard 2008)

Example of complexity from young treatment clients data

Complex adolescent cannabis users in treatment

- three quarters had committed property offences,
- 1.7 mean arrests in past 3 months.

Police cannabis diversion schemes

Two types of schemes for cannabis (not all apply to juveniles)
Youth justice Acts – also cover cautioning diversion in jurisdictions

Prohibition with civil penalties (infringement notices)

- South Australia (1987) – not juveniles
- Australian Capital Territory (1992)
- Northern Territory (1996) – not juveniles
- Western Australia (2004) – not juveniles

Prohibition with cautioning

- Tasmania (1998)
- Victoria (1998) – not juveniles
- New South Wales (2000) – not juveniles
- Queensland (2001)

Ref.adapted from Lenton S

Demographics - police cannabis diversion

	% males	mean age	age range
NSW	86	25.9	14 – 53
ACT	81	20	13 – 53
Victoria	84	23.7	13 – 69
WA	83	26.9	14 – 65
SA	80	21.5	10 – 66
Qld	77	26.3	13 – 55
Tas	80	26.6	14 – 67
NT	70.4	15.2	12 – 26

Does not include:

- civil penalty for adults in SA or NT
- general diversion schemes for juveniles can also be used

Queensland police drug diversion

- police drug diversion program - adults and juveniles
 - cannabis only (not more than 50 grams)
 - mandatory referral
 - 1- 2 hour assessment & education and counselling
 - lots of criteria (admit offence, no prior violent, supply etc)
 - not previously been offered drug diversion

Queensland research on cannabis diversion

Research

- 60% dependent of small sample
Measured by Severity Dependence Scale
(Feeney et al. 2005)
- 95% at baseline reported regular use of cannabis and 74% at the six month follow up
(Hales et al. 2004).

NSW police diversion

- Young offenders Act – warning, caution or family group conference
- NSW – Cannabis cautioning scheme (adults)
- Discretionary for police
- minor possession 15g dried cannabis only
- offenders can only get two cautions:
 - 1st caution – get information – encouraged to contact alcohol and other drug information service
 - 2nd caution required to contact alcohol and drug information service

Victoria police diversion

- Victorian cannabis cautioning program (adults)
 - discretionary for police
 - minor offenders 50g dried cannabis only
 - offenders are cautioned and given a cannabis brochure (optional education session)
 - only two cautions allowed
- Drug diversion (aged 10 & over excludes cannabis)
- Victoria police cautioning program - young offenders
 - Warning or formal caution

South Australia police diversion

Cannabis Expiation Notice (Adults)

(up to 100g cannabis – 1 non- hydro plant or up to 20 g resin)

South Australia police drug diversion initiative

Adult and juvenile (illicit drugs)

- mandatory – Intervention for cannabis stream – juvenile
- less than 100g (no hash, hash oil or plants)
- one assessment and intervention session and where appropriate, referral to treatment

Young offenders Act 1993

Tasmania police diversion

Youth Justice Act 1997

Tasmania – Early intervention and diversion of illicit drug users framework (adult and juvenile)

Discretionary for police

- all forms of cannabis allowed (50 grams or less)
- Program has three levels
 - Level 1 cannabis caution – cautioning includes educational material
 - Level 2 cannabis only – 2nd offence – referral for brief intervention session – face to face counselling with approved D& A worker
 - Level 3 Drug diversion – 3rd cannabis offence or other illicit offence. Assessment plus one or more follow up counselling sessions.

ACT police diversion

Children and young people's Act 1999

Simple cannabis offence notice scheme

- Up to 25 g dried cannabis or 2 plants (non hydro)
- Fine

ACT policing early intervention & diversion program

- Up to 25 g cannabis or up to 0.5 g other illicit
- Get assessment – voluntary treatment

Offenders must admit offences

Discretionary for police

NT police diversion

Cannabis expiation scheme (adults)

- Infringement notice and education & self referral pamphlet
- Fine \$200

NT illicit drug pre court diversion program- (juvenile and adult)

- 50 grams or less of cannabis (20 grams or less other illicit drugs)
- Assessment plus education/ treatment
- Admit offence
- Discretionary

Youth Justice Act

WA police diversion

Cannabis Infringement Notice (adults)

- dried cannabis up to 30 grams & 2 plants non hydro
- discretionary
- pay fine or attend a cannabis education session

Young people's opportunity program (10 – 18)

- any offence – offender has illicit drug problem
- assessment and voluntary education and treatment

Young Offenders Act 1994

Western Australia

Research on CINs

- only 13.4% of 9,328 CINs (WA 2007) attended a cannabis education session to expiate their CIN
- majority support CINs. Proportion of people supporting this scheme dropped from 79% to 66% between 2002 & 2007 (Lenton et al. 2007)

Research questions

- Little is known about numbers of people diverted under youth justice acts
- Rates of diversion
 - similar in urban and rural settings?
 - similar for Indigenous/ non Indigenous?
- Little recent research on police attitudes to schemes
- Use of discretion
- Effectiveness of interventions for cannabis
 - brief interventions
 - motivational interviewing
 - contingency management



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