



THE
CAUSE
COLLECTIVE

Getting to the Heart
of Social Change

YOUTH VOICE

South Auckland young people's
views on the 2020 Elections



Acknowledgement

This report had been developed by The Cause Collective to provide a voice for South Auckland young people about Election 2020 and what they think about the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill. We wish to acknowledge the young people who participated in the focus group and have provided valuable input into the development of this report. These young people demonstrated courage when sharing their views based on their lived experiences and realities.

We also wish to acknowledge Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) for supporting the process. This discussion would have not been as deep and informative without the expertise and wisdom from CAYAD who play a critical role in building community capability to understand and respond to alcohol and other drug issues and increase wellbeing in our communities.

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About The Cause Collective

The Cause Collective is a social change organisation focused on the wellbeing of Pacific peoples and South Auckland communities. Our approach to social change is underpinned by Pacific and Māori indigenous knowledge and prevention systems which guides our understanding of wellbeing.

We look at what is causing a complex problem to exist and why the problem is hard to solve. Often the problems are persistent and are passed on from one generation to the next despite significant investment from consecutive governments into the problem.

We work alongside the communities, businesses, organisations, and agencies that are most affected by a problem to create breakthrough solutions to disrupt the conditions holding the problem in place, and to prevent the problem being experienced by future generations.

About this report

This insights report highlights the findings and conclusions from a focus group talanoa (discussion) with South Auckland young people on the upcoming 2020 elections. This includes a specific focus on the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill which is one of two referendums people are being asked to vote on. We note that as part of the approach it was necessary for the focus group to receive information about the referendum question as the majority of the focus group participants did not have an in depth understanding of the Bill.

This report is part of a series that has been undertaken by The Cause Collective to look at what the election issues are for South Auckland.

As part of the series a set of videos on young people's views was compiled and can be downloaded here: www.facebook.com/thecausecollectivenz

The key findings outlined in this report are:

1. There were key themes that emerged from the talanoa:
 - The potential impacts on an individual young person's wellbeing
 - The potential impacts of legislation on gangs, crime, and social justice
 - The potential impacts of legislation on South Auckland whānau and communities.
2. Young people perceived a difference between the potential impact of the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill on an individual versus their whānau/family and community. At an individual level, cannabis legalisation appeared to be relatively more positive and acceptable. However, when reflecting on the potential impact on whānau and community, there was a shift in mindset with genuine concerns the Cannabis legalisation and Control Bill could have on the South Auckland community.
3. Young people reported they felt more informed and confident in their decision making in the 2020 election as the result of participating in the focus group talanoa. Information received through mainstream communication channels proved insufficient for informing focus group participants about what they were being asked to vote on in the referendum. The Cause Collective will endeavour to provide safe and informative spaces to unpack and discuss key issues that will impact them in the future.

The image features a close-up of a cannabis plant with serrated leaves, overlaid with a large, diagonal pink-to-purple gradient. The text is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**YOUTH VOICE TALANOA ON
2020 ELECTIONS**
Cannabis Referendum



The Cause Collective has identified through its work with young people that there was significant interest and engagement within peer groups about the End of Life Choice referendum. However, there was a noticeable lack of conversation regarding the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill. We were interested in engaging with young people to understand their voice and perspective further.

The Cause Collective in collaboration with Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) facilitated a focus group talanoa with young people from South Auckland. The purpose of this talanoa was to first inform, and then discuss the upcoming referendum. During the talanoa we also canvassed key election issues that were important to the participants.

The participants consisted of young people from South Auckland aged between 18 – 24 years and were a mix of Māori and Pacific ethnic representation and held varied perspectives on the legalisation of recreational use of cannabis.

Discussing the key election issues for young people living in South Auckland

Before the discussion the group participated in a 'forced choice' activity. The purpose was to warm up the room to build trust, safety and emphasise there were no right and wrong answers. This provided a great platform for participation in an informed discussion. It is worth noting that when participants were asked to decide if decisions should be made by politicians or the people, all of the participants were in agreement that the weight of decision making power should lie with the people.

To begin we asked the group what issues in the upcoming 2020 election were most important to them, their families, and communities. Their concerns were largely associated with three key areas:

1. revitalising the urban environment – increased **resources** and **investment** that would contribute to creating a thriving South Auckland. This included aspects like safety and young people seeing their cultural narratives reflected in their local communities.
2. pathways into meaningful **education** and **employment**
3. **economic determinants** – financial security, addressing poverty and affordable housing.

Urban environment

- Public safety concerns
 - Providing free creative spaces for open minds
 - Protecting the whenua "like Ihumatao"
 - Inconvenient road works around the area
 - Urban development, South Auckland needs to be 'revitalised'
-

Education and Employment

- Better resources in schools
 - Transition from school into the workplace and life
 - Financial literacy
-

Economic determinants

- Poverty experienced by young people and their families
 - Lower petrol prices
 - Helping local businesses stay afloat after COVID-19
 - Affordable housing in South Auckland
-

Key themes that emerged from discussion about the cannabis referendum

CAYAD spent time informing participants about the purpose, goals and key elements of the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill before opening the talanoa to the focus group participants. The talanoa was comprised of two parts:

- first thoughts, questions or emotions that came to mind. As well as unpacking what aspects of the information that was shared was the most important and meaningful to them.
- spending time reflecting on the potential impacts of recreational cannabis could have on families and communities in South Auckland in 2025 if it was legalised.

From the talanoa process three key themes emerged and were highlighted as being of greater importance and impact from young people's perspectives if the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill was enacted:

1. Impact on individual wellbeing
2. Impact on gangs, crime and social justice
3. Impact on South Auckland community

The most significant insight of the talanoa was the difference in perception between the impact on the individual versus the whānau and community. At an individual level, cannabis legalisation appeared to be relatively more positive and acceptable. However, when reflecting on the potential impact on whānau and community in the next five years, there was a shift in mindset with genuine concerns the Bill would have negative consequences for South Auckland.

"Legalising cannabis I would be alright but for my family and community it's negative"

"When thinking about the impact on my community, it makes me think differently"

Further details, perspectives and quotes of the young people are shared below.

1. Perspectives through an individual lens 'what impact cannabis has on me and my wellbeing'

Insights:

Young people shared positive experiences with cannabis use and expressed when used in moderation, it was a safe substance.

Most youth perceived cannabis use as mainly for enjoyment rather than an addiction.

Young people were surprised to learn the brain did not stop developing until the age of 25 and hence recognised the need to consider the impacts of cannabis use on their brain development.

"Everything is alright in moderation...like alcohol... just be sensible"

"Cannabis is a health issue because it affects your body"

"It's not bad, it helps me to be creative... there is no massive harm, no one has died from it"

"Any evidence that cannabis can affect your brain positively more than negatively?"

"Cannabis users take cannabis mainly for fun"

2. The potential impacts of legislation on gangs, crime and social justice

Insights:

Participants felt that the legalisation of recreational cannabis would mean that gangs would lose their black-market revenue and look for other ways to make money that would target vulnerable communities in South Auckland.

There was a lack of confidence that the Government and people with decision making power would have sufficient control of regulating the legal market and keeping people safe.

The young people showed empathy for those with criminal convictions from cannabis use and legalising would help reduce the number of convictions and criminals.

"How will they (government) control it? Will people abuse their power?"

"Cannabis is a criminal issue because a lot of people are in prison because of cannabis offences"

"If we take away cannabis from gangs what will they do instead?"

"Make cannabis legal, there will be less criminals"

"If you take this away from gangs what and who else will they target?"

"There's stigma because it's illegal... if it's legal then that will take away the stigma"

"If it's made legal will those that are in prison because of cannabis be released?"

"Didn't they implement prohibition of alcohol in the states and in NZ...and it didn't work?"

3. The potential impacts of legislation on South Auckland whānau and communities.

Insights:

Young people expressed concerns about the potential increase of domestic violence when cannabis is mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

There was concern that already existing inequities such as poverty in South Auckland could be amplified by the legalisation of recreational cannabis. Participants discussed that substance use can be a form of escapism from challenging lived realities.

There was fear the negative consequences of legalised cannabis in South Auckland would potentially reinforce negative perceptions and stereotypes.

There was positivity about the potential revenue from taxing cannabis that could support and improve the urban environment in South Auckland.

"Lots of drawbacks, rise in domestic violence"

"When you mix it with alcohol, you would get more domestic violence"

"I don't think it would have a positive effect"

"Might we see an increase in the smoking of cannabis in schools if it is legalised?"

"More revenue from cannabis tax can be used to fix our urban environment"

"I feel in South Auckland we are bad at consumption, we overeat, we over drink, we overcompensate, we are poor with little money but these things make us feel better about ourselves."

"It can affect some, some will suffer even more and some will benefit. We are trying to break the stereotype of South Auckland, if we legalise cannabis it's like we are going back 10 steps"



Reflections from the participants

At the conclusion of this talanoa young people communicated they felt more informed and confident to make their own decision on the cannabis legalisation and control bill, they also commented that the talanoa helped them understand other people's perspectives.

"Being someone who has never touched it, it opens my perspective, it's cool now that I have opened to other views"

"Confident in my decision and know more"

Next steps

The insights gathered through this process are being used to provide a voice for South Auckland young people in the lead up to Election 2020.

We have shared this insights report with the young people who participated to ensure we have captured their voices authentically. This insights report and youth talanoa will be used as a precedent for future focus groups on the topic of importance for South Auckland young people.

Our intention is to continue to inform and provide a safe space for young people to openly discuss the implications and impact of the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill if it progresses further after the election.