



Ministerial Statement

By

Senator, The Hon. Kim Wilkerson, JP

Attorney-General and Minister of Justice

Clarification on Legal Status of Cannabis Possession

2nd July 2025

Madame President, I rise today to speak briefly on a matter that has drawn much media and public attention. That is the issue of cannabis use and regulation.

Madame President, while the Government is moving forward with the intended reform of our cannabis laws, I find it prudent to remind the public that cannabis use in public remains illegal in Bermuda. Motivated by the principles of social justice and the desire to stop criminalising adults for their personal use choices, this Government decriminalised the possession of 7 grams or less under the Misuse of Drugs (Decriminalisation of Cannabis) Amendment Act 2017. However, decriminalisation is not the same as legalisation. Given the immense interest and recent issues surrounding the sale of cannabis products, I thought it wise to remind the community on the current legal position.

Madame President, this Government's position remains the same – that we are pursuing a path to simplify obtaining cannabis for medicinal purposes, that we are creating a framework to clarify and regulate the import, sale and use of cannabis products, and that we desire to provide opportunities for local cultivation of cannabis – all while remaining conscious of our status as a British Overseas Territory and the restrictions that are imposed on us as a result.

Madame President, alongside these upcoming legislative changes, there must and will be public health considerations taken into account, especially when it comes to our young people.

However, the future is not yet present, and our young people are too often being exposed either through proximity to smokers or by consuming drugs themselves – an exposure that their young bodies and minds cannot handle.

Madame President, the decision to decriminalise the possession of 7 grams of cannabis came out of the desire to ensure that we did not continue to mete out life-altering convictions to individuals that were completely disproportionate to the offence. This was not intended to convey to the public that marijuana use is complete harmless. Any substance, including alcohol, can be harmful to the user depending on the potency and amount consumed.

Madame President, many adults in Bermuda recreationally use cannabis. All the way back in 2006, Bermuda recognised the detrimental effect of second-hand cigarette smoke and banned smoking in all enclosed public spaces and workplaces.

While children can, of course, experience detrimental psychological effects from exposure to an intoxicated adult who has drunk too much, they do not consume the alcohol itself second hand.

This is not so with cannabis. Adult users who have become accustomed to smoking cannabis indoors with children present may not even realise they are exposing these children to a contact high that is detrimental to their minds. Behavioural issues that seem to appear out of nowhere can be traced to this exposure.

Madame President, the government continues to support a path to safe adult recreational use of cannabis. However, even as we move forward in this direction, we need to be mindful of exposing young people to cannabis both through second hand smoke and through normalising the use of it at a young age.

As of the 2023 National School Survey, 28.5% of S4 students have used marijuana. Most male users initiated marijuana use at 12 years or younger, whereas female users have started at 15 years old.

Many local families have reported symptoms of psychosis in their young people who have used cannabis. These incidents have been increasing in the past few years as strains become more potent. The misperception that recreational cannabis use is now legal here in Bermuda is held by many of these young people.

Madame President, I urge members of our community to restrict their cannabis use to locations without children present and to speak with their children about the dangers of cannabis use. Young minds are still developing, and cannabis use can have an irreversible psychiatric effect on some children and teenagers, burdening them with psychiatric disorders that could have been avoided if use started at a later age.

Madame President, we must balance moving forward with a society that allows adults to make their own decisions on recreational cannabis use, with understanding the current legal position as it stands today and, in particular, protecting our young people from the effects of a drug that can cause irreversible harm.

I do not stand here today in judgment, but merely to encourage the adult members of our community to be aware of and respect the current legal position, and more importantly to recognise that they set the example for the young people in their lives. So let us all be good examples.

Thank you, Madame President.