

MEDIA RELEASE

14 May 2026

SHARC BACKS PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR CANNABIS CAUTIONING REFORM IN VICTORIA

Victorians are being criminalised for low-level cannabis possession when cautions are more appropriate, according to the Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC).

The leading Melbourne-based not-for-profit for people impacted by alcohol and other drugs, gambling and related harms, welcomes yesterday's successful motion in the Victorian Legislative Council supporting the formalisation of cannabis cautioning into law.

The motion, introduced by Rachel Payne from Legalise Cannabis Victoria, passed with support from both government and opposition members.

SHARC's CEO, Clare Davies, said such support was a crucial step towards a fairer and more consistent approach in Victoria.

“It recognises that too often people are harmed by systems that respond with punishment instead of care. This is about treating people with dignity, reducing unnecessary harm, and keeping people out of the justice system when what they need is community, health, and support-based responses that help.”

At SHARC, staff saw firsthand the lasting harm a criminal conviction can cause, she said.

“What might be seen as a minor cannabis charge can follow someone for years — affecting their housing, their ability to get work, and their mental health. For young people, and for those already dealing with hardship, that kind of system response can close doors rather than offer support.”

First Nations communities and other marginalised groups have consistently been disproportionately affected by criminalisation, said Davies.

“We know that First Nations people are up to 11 times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession. Communities already experiencing disadvantage should not continue to carry the burden.”

END



For media enquiries, please contact Shannyn Warren Communications Adviser:

swarren@sharc.org.au

0426 773 628