

Museum defends artist's call for drugs to fuel teens' creativity

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An Australian museum has defended an artist who suggested that teenagers be given marijuana to unlock their potential, describing the proposal as "brave and creative".

Leon Ewing will raise the idea of "educational [marijuana](#)" at an event focusing on challenges faced by high schools in the southern state of Tasmania next month at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart.

"Basically what I'm proposing is the idea of using [performance-enhancing drugs](#) in education," Ewing told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Wednesday.

"We already prescribe amphetamine-like medication for focus and docility. What if we medicated for creativity?"

Ewing, a multimedia artist, said it was already known that many young people experimented with drugs and he suggested that illegal substances could "open the mind to greater creativity and lateral thought".

He said a first step would involve community consultation and debate and that any project would be commenced under a legal framework.

In a statement, Ewing earlier said that he envisaged screening [high school students](#) for robust mental health and latent creativity before they could take the drug. The teenagers could work in residence at MONA in

collaboration with leading contemporary artists, he said.

He said teenagers should take marijuana using customised vaporisers.

"What genius could be nurtured, if not unleashed in such circumstances? What a transformational experience!" he said.

The curator of the event at MONA's Dark Mofo festival, Leigh Carmichael, admitted the suggestion was potentially controversial.

"We don't necessarily agree with this idea, but we love that it's brave and creative, and in order for seismic change, we'll need to think big and be open to provocative ideas," he said.

But Ronnie Voigt, from the Drug Education Network in Tasmania said Ewing's ideas were unsettling.

"(It) doesn't sit well with anyone who understands child development and how [young people](#) develop, and their capacity to think and to explore and to create really good skills as they grow older," Voigt told the ABC.

MONA is a highly regarded but unorthodox museum which has shot to prominence by challenging visitors' senses along with the art establishment.

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