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Press Conference Remarks: Decriminalisation of Cannabis Possession
Remarks presented by Shadow Minister of the Environment Diallo Rabain JP, MP

In 2012 as part of PLP platform we proposed if returned to office we would decriminalise possession of small amounts of cannabis. As has been mentioned today, we must recognise that the main issue is that cannabis possession disproportionately affects the black community due to higher arrest and charge rates, severely reducing access to educational and other opportunities.

I’m speaking from the perspective of talking to our people on the doorstep during canvassing. This is an issue that comes up time and time again. From the father who cannot go away to see his child play in a sporting tournament, to the young woman who has no access to overseas education and has been frozen out of employment opportunities. We need to stop this system that obstructs real opportunities to improve the lives of all and their families. If we continue on the road of inaction, more young lives will be impacted forever. The need for crime prevention must be balanced with the fair application and amendment of laws. Simple non-violent possession must not have a lifetime effect on our people. We all suffer when this stigmatisation and criminalisation of our people hinders their abilities to contribute to our society and provide for themselves and their families. It affects our economy and it burdens our system. We must help each other be the best version of ourselves. Education, treatment and the expansion of opportunity must take precedence over the criminalisation of our people.