

## Irena Katz: We Are Lux owner, meet the Bondi Vape Queen

Her Bondi store is a parlour of bongos, recipe books and CBD oil. When those in the eastern suburbs want to get high (legally), this is where they go.



Irena Katz poses for a photo in her shop We Are Lux, Bondi. Picture: Monique Harmer

Ms Katz is currently assisting about 20 elderly women from the eastern suburbs safely consume the medicinal marijuana prescribed by their doctors and administered legally through a pharmacy.

The bongos in question, **"we prefer the term glassware"** Ms Katz explains, one of which is coated in 22k gold, range up to \$800 in price.

**"Part of the reason I sell what I sell and have gone high-end is I want to price out the kind of people who I don't want in my store,"** Ms Katz said.

Ms Katz, who completed her qualifications as a naturopath, herbalist and nutritionist almost two decades ago, has welcomed a number of local GP's into her store with the doctors then unofficially recommending her to their patients.

The people coming to Ms Katz, who has been in business for the past three years, for help suffer from a range of conditions including chronic pain, cancer, insomnia, anxiety and arthritis.

Ms Katz said doctors have recently become far more comfortable prescribing medicinal cannabis but lacked the resources to show their patients how to consume it which is where she comes in.

**"About a year ago it would have to be something very extreme. You are in the end stages of cancer or that much debilitating pain there is no other option,"** Ms Katz said.

**"In the past year that has changed dramatically."**

While many of her customers opt to smoke their weed as a joint, she attempts to direct them to the much safer process of vaping or for the more culinary minded, baking it into edibles.

She's even assisted clients to create a balm which can be rubbed directly onto their arthritic joints.



Irena Katz poses with one of her many books on offer. Picture / Monique Harmer



In recent weeks, Ms Katz has moved her store into the tenancy above her husband Mischa Esquilant's hydroponics store with a view of creating a **"superstore"** in the hope the legislation changes to allow all Australians to grow a crop for their own personal use.

While she welcomes anyone, who would like to have a conversation about marijuana into her store, Ms Katz strongly advises them to obtain it legally.

**"So a lot of customers will say to me, 'why don't I just score off the street'"** Ms Katz said.

**"Because it's a cash crop in Australia - it's not grown for medicinal purposes in the majority of cases - they add known carcinogenic chemicals to it because it doubles the yield."**

**"Unfortunately, when you put that in the hands of criminals you are asking for trouble. Mould, bits of insect - it's disgusting what they are ingesting."**



Irena Katz with one of the many items for sale. Picture: Monique Harmer