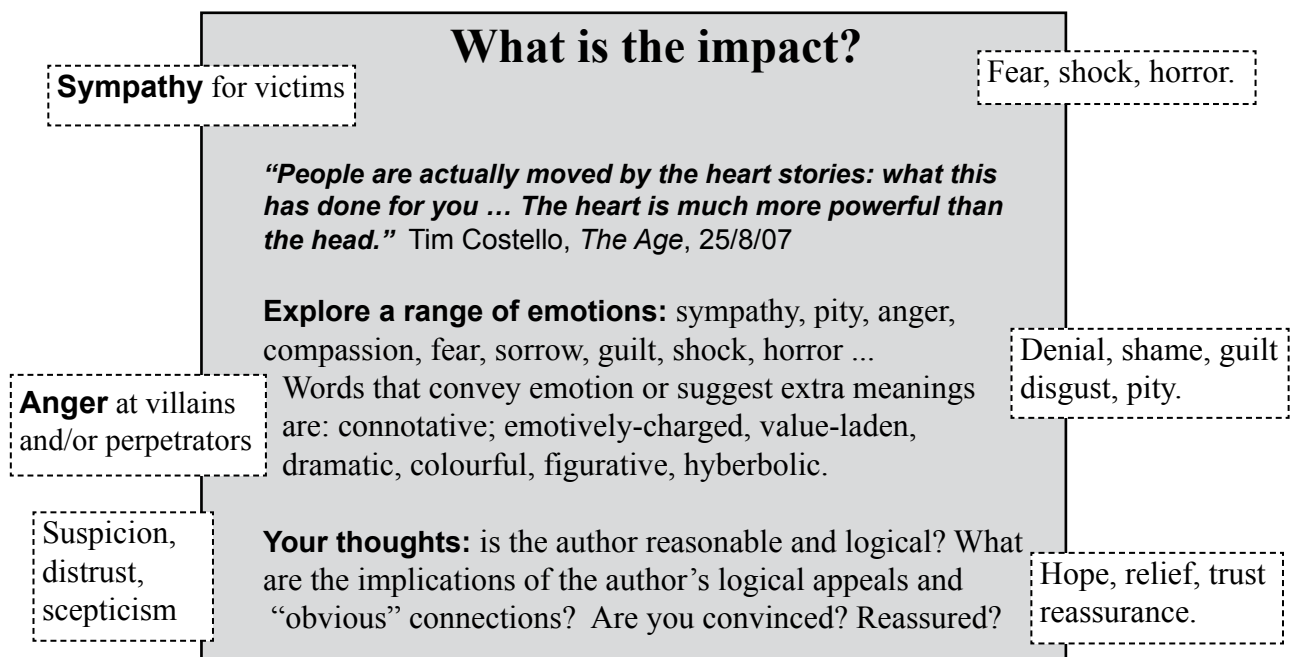
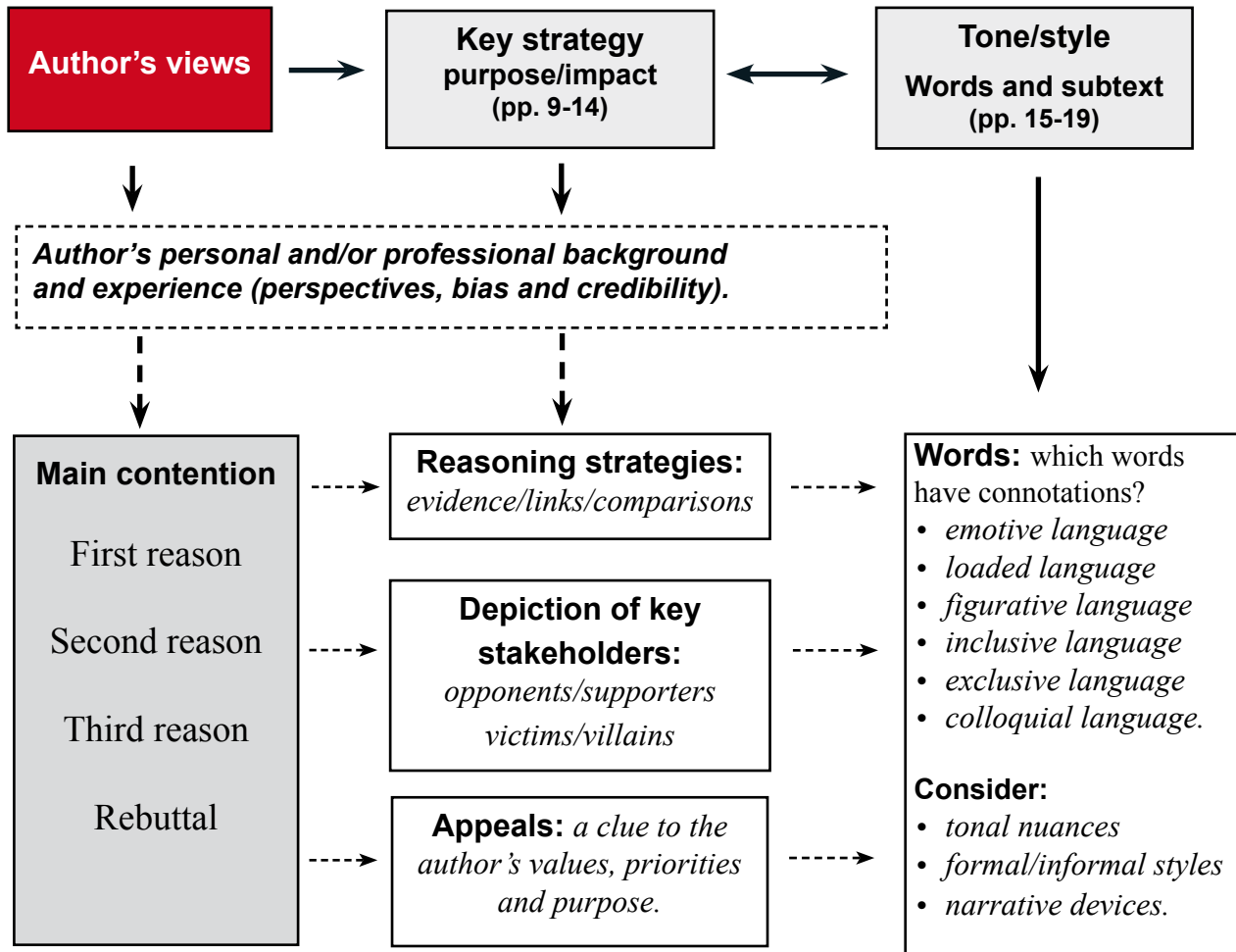


4

Key strategies



Time to take a legal approach to cannabis, Jason Smith

International acceptance of medicinal cannabis is growing because it can provide *relief* for people who can't be sufficiently helped with current pharmaceutical drugs. But despite *growing evidence of its usefulness* in certain situations, medical use of cannabis remains illegal in Australia.

Recently, the US state of Utah has legalised the medical use of cannabis and Alabama is awaiting official approval to do the same. This means *more than 20 states* in the US now permit the medical use of cannabis, but such *benign use* remains not only unattainable but illegal in Australia.

While there seems no will at present to amend legis-

lation in any jurisdiction required to enable medicinal use of cannabis, this has not always been the case.

In 2003, then-NSW premier Bob Carr said a draft exposure bill would be introduced "*at the earliest opportunity*" to provide for a four-year trial of medicinal cannabis use. This trial never took place, despite then-prime minister, John Howard giving the idea qualified support.

Medicinal use of cannabis is now permitted in more than a dozen countries including Canada, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Israel. All these countries still prohibit recreational cannabis use – *there's no reason that Australia can't do the same*.

View: cannabis should be legalised for medicinal purpose

Persuasive/reasoning strategies:

evidence/comparison; Australian states lag behind worldwide trends, esp. American states.

People: criticism of Australian politicians (implied contrast with other politicians)

Value/appeal: prioritises health and wellbeing and the individual's right to have access to medicinal remedies. (Subtext: anticipates the public's anxiety at risks.)

Purpose: predisposes audience to recognise the progressive step taken by those who seek to legalise cannabis and isolate/shame our leaders.

Tone: adamant, accusatory, prosaic

Words: group those with a common purpose:

- "growing evidence": implies that there is sound proof and no reason to object
- "more than 20 states"; an urgent trend
- "relief" for people: necessary health benefits
- "benign use": positive connotations; free of harm (reassures public; minimises harm).
- Bob Carr's quote: "at the earliest opportunity" to show qualified support; but the lack of political will
- "no reason that Australia can't do the same": dogmatic tone; foregone conclusion that it is the right choice of action.

Clear focus and key strategy: comparison of states and politicians →

Appeals and value; words and purpose →

Specific words relating to key stakeholders and purpose →

Adopting a *pragmatic* tone, Mr Smith contends that cannabis should be legalised in Australia for medicinal purposes. The author's reference to the American states and international examples such as Canada and Israel encourages members of the public to recognise their progressive approach to health and wellbeing. The fact that cannabis is described as "benign" and has the capacity to provide "relief" from pain focuses on its positive benefits, minimises any problems and reassures a possibly anxious public. Also that there is "growing evidence of its usefulness" *logically* points to a well-informed writer-researcher who is aware of the need to minimise any controversy. *Clearly*, the public are positioned to voice their frustration and anger at the lack of political will in Australia versus the sensible and courageous stance taken by American officials. *According to Mr Smith who becomes increasingly accusatory*, Mr Carr recognised the urgency and the need for change and said that a bill would be available "at the earliest opportunity" but he shamefully failed to take action.

Note: a clear focus and common thread running throughout the paragraph to avoid listing; logical progression from big picture to specific examples; signposts to show a progression of ideas from concept to specific examples; tone words sprinkled throughout; wide-branching sentences with an emphasis on purpose and impact; quotes key words and explains their implication.