



Media Release

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PCA supports moves to legalise medicinal cannabis

Medicinal cannabis should be made available to Australians with specific symptoms, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

“In the right circumstances, with the right evidence to support it we believe medicinal cannabis could help people in pain where other medicines have not been successful,” she said.

PCA’s submission on the Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014 supports the overall intent of the Bill. It is endorsed by leading Australian palliative care professors and state and territory palliative care organisations.

“It’s important we have this debate in Australia. The issue has been raised and dismissed many times. We support an open discussion on this issue.”

Ms Callaghan said establishing an evidence base for the use of an illegal drug in a medical situation is vital to employing it to help patients.

“There are patients and doctors who support the use of medicinal cannabis, but Australians need good evidence to make this decision, not just anecdotal stories. This is the case with general medications and it should be the same for medicinal cannabis.

“The research and development component of the Bill is vital. If doctors and patients are using medicinal cannabis it should be with confidence and with an understanding of the impacts and benefits of its long-term use, including any adverse effects.”

Ms Callaghan said palliative care supports safe, compassionate and appropriate care as people approach the end of life, and this should be the principle applied when considering any medications.

“We cannot underestimate the power of pain to limit a person’s enjoyment of their life. It can be debilitating, impacting psychological, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.

“PCA supports the use of medicinal cannabis for patients for whom other therapies have not been effective or where the treating medical professional believes it is the most suitable evidence-based therapy.” Ms Callaghan said.

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http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Medicinal_Cannabis_Bill/Submissions

