



Media Release

Sunday, 24 May 2015

Survey signals support for medicinal cannabis in Australia

More than two-thirds of Australians support the use of medicinal cannabis, a new survey from Palliative Care Australia (PCA) has revealed.

PCA CEO Liz Callaghan said the numbers in favour are high, with 67% of the 1000 Australians asked approving of using the drug.

“The number is quite high, but importantly large numbers of ‘undecided’ participants makes a strong case for a good evidence base for any introduction of the drug in a medical context.

“Almost a quarter (24%) of those surveyed were not sure if they agreed with using cannabis in medicine and about 9% opposed.

“Those opposed to medicinal cannabis based their views largely on the fact it is currently illegal, (20%) and others raised concerns about possible side effects (19%). These side effects need to be well known before we can support the drug being used in medicine,” she said.

Ms Callaghan said when asked to assume medicinal cannabis was legal and available, there was general support for people who might benefit from it having access to it (45%).

“The survey suggests that if cannabis is legalised, Australians would like to see it used to help those who would benefit from its use – with improved health or decreased symptoms, as well as those in great pain (21%).

“In National Palliative Care Week, exploring issues like medicinal cannabis is necessary. We might find it does not help many people, or interacts badly with treatment medications – or we could find something to help many thousands of Aussies. Australia is ready to look outside the box for potential treatments and it is a vital debate.

“For older Australians the legality of the drug was not an issue. In fact 72% of 75-84 year olds compared to 62% of 18-24 year olds would vote to legalise medicinal cannabis. Young people considered the drugs illegal status as the main reason for opposing it (26%).

Ms Callaghan said PCA supported further investigation into medicinal cannabis with the caveat that any decisions about its use need to be considered in light of further research into side effects and impacts on other medications a patient might be taking.

“We need to have an informed debate on this issue in Australia. A number of terminally ill Australians may benefit from the addition of medicinal cannabis to their pain relief, but we need to be certain it does more good than harm.” She said.

Media contact: PCA Frith Rayner 0400 45 99 88

National Palliative Care Week: Sunday 24 May – Saturday 30 May

Palliativecare.org.au



Survey data from the states undergoing medicinal cannabis trials and other survey data

Do you support the use of cannabis use for medicinal purposes?	OVERALL	Male	Female	18-24 years old	25-34 years old	35-44 years old	45-54 years old	55-64 years old	65-74 years old	75-84 years old	85+ years old
Yes	66.8%	65.7%	68.0%	62.2%	60.6%	70.7%	70.9%	65.8%	67.9%	72.4%	33.3%
No	9.6%	9.9%	9.3%	14.1%	12.9%	10.1%	8.2%	6.7%	7.9%	0.0%	33.3%
Not Sure	23.6%	24.4%	22.7%	23.7%	26.5%	19.1%	20.9%	27.5%	24.2%	27.6%	33.3%

What is the main reason you don't you support the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes?	OVERALL	Male	Female	18-24 years old	25-34 years old	35-44 years old	45-54 years old	55-64 years old	65-74 years old	75-84 years old	85+ years old
Personal belief	17.5%	13.7%	21.7%	21.1%	20.0%	5.3%	26.7%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Religious belief	11.3%	13.7%	8.7%	5.3%	20.0%	15.8%	13.3%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cannabis is illegal	19.6%	23.5%	15.2%	26.3%	20.0%	10.5%	26.7%	10.0%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Potential community repercussions of such a legalisation	10.3%	9.8%	10.9%	15.8%	0.0%	15.8%	0.0%	30.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Harmful side effects	18.6%	11.8%	26.1%	15.8%	15.0%	15.8%	26.7%	10.0%	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%
We don't know enough about it	9.3%	11.8%	6.5%	10.5%	0.0%	15.8%	6.7%	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%
I just disagree with it	9.3%	7.8%	10.9%	5.3%	20.0%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Other (please specify)	4.1%	7.8%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.3%	0.0%	10.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%

If medicinal cannabis was legalised, who do you think should be given access to it?	OVERALL	Male	Female	18-24 years old	25-34 years old	35-44 years old	45-54 years old	55-64 years old	65-74 years old	75-84 years old	85+ years old
I don't agree with medicinal cannabis under any circumstances	5.0%	4.9%	5.1%	6.7%	8.4%	4.3%	2.7%	5.4%	3.6%	0.0%	33.3%
People with a terminal condition	16.4%	15.2%	17.6%	18.5%	20.0%	16.5%	15.4%	14.1%	13.9%	17.2%	33.3%
People in great pain	20.8%	21.8%	19.7%	22.2%	25.8%	21.8%	18.1%	17.4%	19.4%	24.1%	0.0%
People experiencing distressing and/or painful symptoms	4.8%	4.5%	5.1%	5.9%	3.9%	5.3%	6.0%	2.0%	4.2%	10.3%	0.0%
People with a chronic illness	4.2%	3.3%	5.1%	5.9%	5.2%	4.3%	6.0%	1.3%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
People whose condition may respond positively to it's use	44.6%	45.0%	44.2%	37.8%	31.0%	45.2%	43.4%	55.0%	54.5%	48.3%	0.0%
Other (please specify)	4.3%	5.3%	3.2%	3.0%	5.8%	2.7%	8.2%	4.7%	1.2%	0.0%	33.3%