



Media Release

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Medicinal cannabis regulatory changes a step in the right direction

Moves to develop a national licensing scheme for medicinal cannabis cultivation is another step towards access for compassionate use, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA), CEO Liz Callaghan.

Ms Callaghan said she hoped the move would grease the wheels of change to make it possible for people with a terminal condition to gain compassionate access to the drug.

“This change gives national consistency for growers and means states and territories do not have to develop their own legislation,” she said.

“PCA recognises these changes take time, but the small steps the Government is taking are all moving in a direction that we hope will see compassionate access to medicinal cannabis a reality for patients in the not too distant future.”

Ms Callaghan said she was also encouraged by Health Minister Sussan Ley’s language when making the announcement when she said controlled cultivation would ‘provide the critical ‘missing piece’ for a sustainable legal supply of safe medicinal cannabis products for Australian patients in the future.’

Ms Callaghan said PCA supported additional research into medicinal cannabis before the drug was made available beyond compassionate use and noted the first meeting held yesterday of the NSW Medicinal Advisory Council that will guide the NSW governments medicinal cannabis research program.

“We support the trials underway around the country, particularly to understand the potential adverse drug reactions between medicinal cannabis and therapeutic drugs for those still undergoing active treatment. However, when a person is facing a terminal illness managing pain, rather than curative treatment, can be more important to them.

She said there had been increasing community acceptance of medicinal cannabis, evidenced by the number of state trials underway.

“Earlier this year we surveyed more than 1000 Australians on the topic and found 67% supported its use. Of those, 21% thought, if legalised, it should be used for people in pain, while a further 44% thought those people’s whose condition would respond positively to its use should be able to access it.

“PCA also recognises the work of Greens Leader Senator Richard Di Natale who introduced his Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill last year which has paved the way for public debate on the issue and has helped move this discussion forward in the community and in the Parliament.

“Palliative care is primarily aimed at reducing a terminally ill person’s pain and managing their symptoms. If medicinal cannabis can be safely used, it is one more tool in the toolbox for doctors, carers and patients,” Ms Callaghan said.

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