



Media Release

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Cultivation laws provide certainty in supply

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) has welcomed the introduction of new medicinal cannabis legislation to Federal Parliament this morning, setting Australia on the path to developing a medically sound product.

PCA CEO Liz Callaghan said establishing an Australian supply would give researchers and eventually doctors, a better understanding of what is in the medication.

“If we have an Australian product we have the means to ensure all the elements of the drug are known,” she said.

Director of palliative care at St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney Associate Professor Richard Chye, who is involved in the medicinal cannabis research trials said if passed, the legislation would overcome some barriers to research.

“To begin our trials we have had to import a product from overseas. If there was an Australian product we could know much more about THC/CBD levels, what else is in it and ensure all the elements of the drug are known. This is a medical trial so we need a medical grade product.

“The next step is to develop an authority, whether the TGA or a separate body, to ensure standardisation of the product as it is developed for medical use. It will be important for medical practitioners to know the THC/CBD levels in the products they prescribe,” he said.

Ms Callaghan agreed good progress is being made with this legislation.

“This is a good start for the introduction of medicinal cannabis to Australia and PCA congratulates the Minister for her work on this legislation. It should ensure a safe, local and reliable supply of locally grown cannabis leading to the manufacture of the therapeutic product.

“PCA believes a public awareness campaign to build understanding around the use of medicinal cannabis, both within the community and across the medical profession is important. A 2015 PCA survey of more than 1000 Australians indicated a high level of acceptance of the drug, with 67% in favour, but almost a quarter of Australians remain ‘unsure’ indicating the stigma remains.

“PCA supports the use of medicinal cannabis where research proves its effectiveness. However, we have also campaigned for relaxation of legislation to allow people diagnosed with a terminal condition to have access to the drug for pain relief.

“Hopefully, with this legislation, the medicinal cannabis product will reach those who could most benefit from access to it.

“We look forward to continuing to work with the Government on this legislation, it will make a considerable difference to the ensuring quality end of life experiences for many Australians,” Ms Callaghan said.

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