

Submission

Of Medicinal Cannabis in Queensland

The Draft Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis)

Bill 2016

A Submission made by: Frances McDonald member of the
MCUA (Medical Cannabis Users Association)



Background:

In its broadest sense, ‘medical cannabis’ means cannabis used for medicinal purposes. In this paper “‘medicinal cannabis’ means cannabis plant extracts and synthetic compounds that mimic the effect of substances found in the cannabis plant, where these products are used for therapeutic use.

Comment:

In other words, the Queensland Government are referring to synthetic medical cannabis, not real cannabis. The Queensland Government should be acknowledging the fact that medical cannabis is an **un-patentable** herb due to the THC cannabinoids it possesses. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24).

The Palaszczuk government has consulted extensively and widely with the community and with health industry stakeholders about the reforms proposed in this bill. More than 96% of respondents to a recent government survey on the “Get Involved” website regarding the draft bill supported treatment with “real medical cannabis products.” Not synthetics.

The Queensland Government shouldn’t be allowing big pharmaceutical companies, such as GW Pharmaceuticals and Insys Therapeutics the rights to produce Genetically Modified Organism products which only contain fragments of medical cannabis.

These pharmaceutical companies extract certain fragments and neurotransmitters from the cannabis plant in order to “mimic” the effects of medical cannabis.

The Government mentions:

“The quality, safety and efficacy of most medicinal cannabis products have not been verified to the exacting standards that apply to prescription medications.”

If this is the case, then the Queensland Government should not allow these pharmaceutical companies the rights to produce inferior dangerous products which could cause adverse drug reactions, or even death to children or adults, suffering from life threatening illnesses. These synthetic products have already been proven not to be as effective as the whole, real cannabis plant, and don't provide ongoing relief to the prescribed patient.

There is a need to draw attention to the fact that there are current law suits against the pharmaceutical company Insys Therapeutics for their main product Subsys- Fentanyl. Fentanyl is a potent analgesic that acts on mu-receptors (Brain, spinal cord, smooth muscle) (Tiziani, A, 2006, pg. 576).

It is also interesting to note that GW Pharmaceuticals has also been known as NASDAQ.

These pharmaceutical companies are notorious for changing their names and allying with other pharmaceutical companies, when faced with lawsuits, in order to protect their vested interests.

Peter Gotzsche a well-known psychiatrist has written several books about psychiatry and the use of anti-psychotic medication. His latest book has mentioned ten companies in his “Hall of Shame” of Big Pharmaceutical companies.

These companies are;

Pfizer, Novartis, Sanofi-Aventis, Glaxo Smith Kline, Astra Zeneca, Roche, Johnson and Johnson, Merck, Eli Lilly and Abbott Laboratories-

When researched, these companies have, or, are currently facing law suits due to the fact that their prescription drugs are causing damage to consumers.

Pfizer, Merck and other big pharmaceuticals are likely to acquire marijuana based drug companies. It has been recorded that medical cannabis generated more than 4.2 billion in revenue in the U.S in 2015, according to ArcView Market Research.

(Guru, Focus, 2016, June, 13, 05:58:14 PM, Nasdaq.com).

But for right now, Big Pharma appears to be throwing up roadblocks to stymie or delay development of prescription cannabinoid (CBD) medicines. (Guru, Focus, 2016, m.nasdaq.com).

It appears not difficult to figure out why: To protect product franchises that could be cannibalized by medical cannabis- based medicines that might work better- and with fewer side effects- and not be addictive. (Guru, Focus, 2016, m.nasdaq.com).

According to Natural Society, which promotes natural health, some day medical cannabis could replace pain killers like Vicodin, sleep aid like Ambien and anti-depressants like Zoloft among others. (Guru, Focus, 2016, m.nasdaq.com).

It is also important to draw attention to the fact that Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull has investments with Pfizer.

It is a fact that “Through the process of rational drug design, scientists manipulate the chemical structures of known cannabinoids to design more effective agents”. (Viridian, Capital, Advisors, 2015, pg.7). “Several new cannabinoids are being developed for human use; however, none have reached human testing stage in the United States”. (Viridian, Capital, Advisors, 2015, pg.7).

The people of Queensland voted for “whole plant therapy” of the cannabis plant. Full plant therapy of the medical cannabis plant is successfully treating unwanted side effects caused by neurological disturbances such as; epilepsy, HIV, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease as well as many other debilitating issues like, diabetes, and neuromuscular disorders, such as arthritis, asthma, various forms of cancer just to name a few.

Medical cannabis is the only in patentable substance that binds on synaptic nerves within the brain and central nervous system or endocannabinoid system. Medical cannabis should also be used for mental health illnesses as well because anti-psychotic, anti- depressant pharmaceutical drugs don’t work and only cause more adverse drug reactions.

Existing Regulatory Framework

This Bill does not authorise people to grow their own cannabis even if intended, for their own therapeutic use. Nor does it authorise any recreational use of cannabis. These activities will remain offences under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986. The bill also contains strong penalties for unauthorised use of prescribed medicinal cannabis products.

The Queensland Government should be acknowledging that the war on drugs is failing. The Queensland Government should be working towards the Drug Law Reform’s Ten Point Plan of effective drug laws and that is acknowledging to treat drug use as a health and social issue, and not a law enforcement issue.

The Government should not be prosecuting people because they want to self-medicate on cannabis full plant therapy. People should have a say not to be killed off by pharmaceutical drugs.

Alcohol has killed and ruined lives by the millions since the prohibition of cannabis but it is still legal.

The Queensland Government should also be taking into consideration that the current health /mental health system isn't working due to the fact that these anti-psychotic, anti-depressant and anti-inflammatory pharmaceutical drugs are ruining the lives of patients, their families as well as the reputations of many health professionals such as Psychiatrists, GPs, nursing staff and other allied health professionals and support groups who are employed to help those with mental health issues and those people with disabilities within the communities of Queensland.

These big pharmaceutical drug and alcohol industries have maimed and injured millions of lives because their drugs and alcohol have been proven not to work as effectively as cannabis does.

Scheduling

Unfortunately due to prohibition, the Government has allowed big pharmaceutical companies the rights to promote and profit from their toxic anti-psychotic, anti-depressant and anti-inflammatory drugs, as well as several other medications like Salbutamol (Asmol) inhalers for the treatment of Asthma. (Tizianni, A, 2007, pg.62).

Before prohibition, medical cannabis was smoked for the relief of Asthma as it relaxes the smooth muscle enabling narrow airways to open allowing a person to breathe.

All these pharmaceutical drugs have been big contributing factors to an overburdened health and mental health system. These pharmaceutical drugs have killed and injured millions of people for close on a decade now. If these

drugs really worked, the population would not seek the black market in order to medicate themselves with medical cannabis.

The reasons why these anti-psychotic, anti-depressant and anti-inflammatory drugs don't work is due to the fact that they do not bind on the synaptic nerves with in the brain and central nervous system, like cannabis does, as mentioned previously. Instead, they antagonise and / or block at other neuro- receptor sites such as the dopamine sites D1 and D2 as well as serotonin and Noradrenaline receptor sites within the brain and central nervous system.

Due to this reason, they cause more unwanted side effects.

Medical cannabis has proven itself to be a medication in its own right, treating a vast array of symptoms. For thousands of years, generations sort medical cannabis for the relief of pain, neurological disorders and mental health illnesses. As mentioned before, the prohibition of medical cannabis has been based on laws that are rotten, therefore, the TGA has based its pharmaceutical policies on lies and corruption.

Schedule 9 and Schedule 8

Due to the prohibition of medical cannabis, the TGA has based its classification of dangerous pharmaceutical drugs on lies and roots that are rotten. Referring to the classification of cannabis being a dangerous drug, and should be classed as a Schedule 8.

Question “If cannabis is such a dangerous drug, why has Canberra more or less de- criminalised it”? The answer to this is quite obvious,” in case a politician or their children are caught consuming it, they wouldn't get a criminal record”.

Scientists have discovered that humans have a special bodily system called the endocannabinoid system. (Viridian, Capital, Advisors, 2005, pg.1) Otherwise known as the neurological system.

Cannabis has the appearance of a relatively safe drug because our bodies lack receptors for it on our brain stems. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24).

The Brain stem, which looks after critical functions like breathing, has receptors for opioids, Which is one of the reasons that when people overdose on heroin, morphine or similar substances, they often die because they have forgotten to breathe. There is no evidence of someone ever overdosing on cannabis. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24).

The analgesic effect , the red eyes, the feeling of well-being, the dry mouth and increased appetite come from this neat compound or one of it metabolites, which are the chemicals created when the liver does its job on the THC. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24).

Pharmacologist Raphael Mechoulam has mentioned that our bodies don't produce THC. In 1988, scientists discovered receptors in our brain tuned to respond to THC. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24).

Since our bodies don't produce THC, researchers reasoned that our brains must synthesise a similar chemical. Enkephalin which are naturally occurring neuro-chemicals whose receptors respond to opioids like morphine. (Gliddon, J, 2004, pg.24). This is the most important fact as to why Medical Cannabis should not be classed as a Schedule 8 but classed as a botanical herb.

Synthetic opiates should only be used in hospitals and GP surgeries for the short term relief of acute pain acquired by post-operative surgery or injury caused by accident or burns victims. Synthetic opiates should not be used for chronic pain like they have been. Synthetic opiates have been over abused within the health

care system. The Governments over the years have been responsible for making people suffer from adverse drug reactions and opiate dependence.

Developments in other jurisdictions

Prohibition has not worked. It causes increased corruption, crime, disease and death. The Australian drug law reform aims to take the profit out of the illicit drug industry and effectively confront Australia's illicit drug problem.

Therefore they advocate the following:

- 1) Treat drug use as a health and social issue, not a law enforcement problem.
- 2) Maintain penalties for unauthorised, large-scale (defined) cultivation, production, transport, sale and possession of all drugs.
- 3) Fund equally law enforcement, education and treatment
- 4) Provide well-funded, research-based, effective drug education for the community and schools to be developed by education and health professionals.
- 5) Remove criminal sanctions for the personal use of illicit drugs
- 6) Regulate and tax commercial production and sale of cannabis
- 7) Expand drug treatment and needle exchange programs to meet demand and establish safe injecting facilities
- 8) Adopt non-custodial sentencing options such as drug treatment, counselling or community service orders for those apprehended for minor drug related offences
- 9) Trial and rigorously evaluate a wide range of treatment options including the medical prescription of heroin
- 10) Expand Australia's successful harm reduction approach to drugs for the benefit and well-being of all members of the community.
(Currie, S, Cameron, D, 2000 Pg. 572).

Objectives of the Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to create a new regulatory frame work under which medicinal cannabis products may be prescribed and dispensed to patients in Queensland.

A key objective of the Bill is to minimise the complexity and regulatory burden of the scheme on patients, medical practitioners and pharmacists while ensuring the quality, safety and efficacy of medicinal cannabis products where possible.

We the people of Queensland want;

- Basically we want the freedom to choose cannabis whole plant medicine as a front line treatment.
- We want to access the plant for food and for medicine without interference from the police and other authorities
- We want to be able to grow our own if we so choose
- We want clean hygienic products that we can trust if we cannot grow or make our own
- We want affordable products that we can trust if we cannot make our own
- We want affordable products available “over the counter”
- We want products grown in the sun with no chemical /toxic growth regulators used
- We want testing facilities available to everyone who needs them
- We want dispensary styled outlets that specialise in cannabis therapies
- We want clinics attached to these serviced by our experts who have on the job experience
- We want AUTHORISATION for our community providers in the interim, so they can continue their work unhindered by the new offences created in the bill

- We want to train medical staff in the applications and uses for cannabis based therapeutics
- We want doctors to be able to openly refer patients to these clinics as they do now covertly
- We want doctors to be able to stand up and support cannabis without fear of retribution- many are saying behind their hands that cannabis works and they want access to it for their patients
- We want to run courses and workshops to teach people how to grow and make their own oil safely
- We want a scheme whereby people using cannabis products, now are protected from prosecution and from having their medicine taken away from them and their plants destroyed. We want a scheme that protects the patient the carer and the provider.
- We want changes to the drug laws to create a defence for medicinal use in the interim
- We want the laws to reflect the best outcomes for the people. This includes changing the drug laws and the penalties. No victim no Crime. People need and want to take some responsibility for their own health care and should not be penalised by the law for doing so
- We want the health budget to be spent inside this state on initiatives like ours that prevent the funds being funnelled off to international drug companies when the expertise exists here in this country to make us among the world leaders in cannabis growing and product manufacturing

Proposed Regulatory Framework

Due to the prohibition of medical cannabis and the control big pharmaceutical companies have had over the health/ mental health professions, there are still a lot of doctors and psychiatrists within the community that do not wish to

prescribe medical cannabis to their patients. The Governments have allowed big pharmaceutical companies the rights to coerce doctors, psychiatrists, and other allied health professionals to use their deadly pharmaceutical drugs for close on a century.

There is too much red tape in this bill which would only cause more frustration to someone suffering from life threatening illnesses such as cancer, epilepsy, mental health disorders, and chronic disabilities to name just a few.

The Government should take into consideration that another reason why consumers have self-medicated on medical cannabis for several years, and have not bothered to ask their GP for medical cannabis is the fact that medical cannabis is an illegal drug. Patients also don't like to ask their doctors to prescribe medical cannabis products, because some doctors would see them as addicts, to an illicit substance.

It is a well-known fact that due to the kickbacks these health professionals get from big pharmaceutical companies, a majority of doctors are biased to the fact that cannabis cures several illnesses, for this reason most doctors don't wish to prescribe medical cannabis products for their patients.

Medicinal Cannabis

The annual cost to purchase Sativex is \$16,000. According to Professor Gavin Giovannoni of the London School of Medicine, Sativex “has not been proven to be cost effective” due to this, a large number of multiple sclerosis patients continue to self-medicate on illegal forms of cannabis ([leafscience,2014. http://www.com](http://www.leafscience.com)), Under federal law, Sativex is not considered to be cannabis. Sativex has been given its own scientific name Nabiximols. There are other products such as Marinol (Dronabinol) and Cesamet (Nabilone), this allows Sativex to be scheduled separately from cannabis.

Sativex fails in cancer pain study, GW Pharmaceutical shares plummet.

(Green, Johnny, 2015, 7:06 AM, January 9).

Marijuana opponents always try to make it sound like all we need is cannabis derived pharmaceutical derived pharmaceutical products, and that legalizing the entire plant for medicinal purposes is a waste of time.

One product that they point to early and often is Sativex. There is one major problem with their argument, Sativex doesn't work the same as using the entire cannabis plant. It was proven in a recent study during which Sativex failed to help cancer patient's deal with their pain. (Green, Johnny, 2015, 7:06, January, 9).

An experimental cannabis drug failed to alleviate pain in cancer patients as hoped in a clinical study, sending share in it British maker GW Pharmaceuticals as much as 21% lower on Thursday.

GW Chief Executive Justin Gover said the findings were both disappointing and surprising, given encouraging results in earlier tests, but the company's scientists had not given up hope.

So at the end of the day, the question asked is, “Can Sativex help some patients in some fashion? Probably. Is it the end all be all that medical marijuana

opponents and members of the pharmaceutical industry are touting it as? Not even close. Sativex should not come at the expense of legalizing the entire cannabis plant, which helps far more people. (Green, Johnny, 2015, 7:06, January 9).

Eligible Patients

Medical cannabis should be available to everyone who needs it, as it has been clearly defined as a safe drug. Again, a lot safer than the drugs already on the market to treat an array of health and mental health issues.

The time it takes for doctors to prescribe synthetic opiates, is one day. The time it takes to process a medical cannabis application in Queensland is up to 3 months. Over dose deaths per year on Opiates is 69,000. Overdose on medical cannabis is zero. There should be no question that real cannabis is in fact the safer drug.

Approval for Medical Cannabis

There shouldn't be all this red tape for a chronically sick and possibly dying person to go through in order to access the use of medical cannabis. The people of Queensland requested "full plant therapy" in the petitions that were conducted. Half the reason why Queenslanders voted for Labor was based on the assumption that Labor was going to do the right thing by their voters and legalise "Full Plant Therapy" of medical cannabis. The TGA has already given approval to Queensland to access medical cannabis. It is now up to the government to work out whether they are going to do the right thing by giving Queenslanders "Full Plant Therapy" products or subject Queenslanders to synthetic cannabis pharmaceutical products that are inferior to the cannabis plant and may cause life threatening illnesses.

Medicinal Cannabis Prescriptions

The doctor should be able to write out a script for the patient. The patient, along with their health/disability care card, should be able to go to a dispensary choose the type and quality cannabis products they wish to purchase. Their health /disability care card number is written down or recorded on the computer. Simple.

Expert advisory panel

There should be an unbiased panel of experts who have full understanding of the properties of medical cannabis, “Full Plant Therapy”.

This panel should include:

- Scientists who will thoroughly research endocannabinoids and their function within the human brain and central nervous system.
- Education on the justice system and the law
- Ethics, culture or sociology
- Agriculture.

Offence Provisions

The Queensland Government should stop making money out of vulnerable people within the community who only want to self-medicate on medical cannabis, because these pharmaceutical drugs cause more unwanted side effects. These penalties have ruined young and older people’s lives and should stop right now. The community are the very people who voted and rallied for the members of parliament in the first place. The government should be doing the right thing by the people for the people.

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