



**Carers Queensland Inc. submission to the
Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2016 -
Health, Communities, Disability Services and
Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee**

July 2016

Submission Title: Submission to the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2016 - Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

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CARERS QUEENSLAND INC.

Family and friend carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or are frail aged.

The activity and impact of providing care is best understood in terms of its context; as a relationship between two or more individuals, rooted in family, friendship or community. Caring is a role rarely chosen by most, nor does it discriminate. Children and young people, people of working age and older people, people with disability, people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, indigenous Australians, people with diverse bodies, genders, relationships and sexualities and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to a family member or friends on a daily basis. For some caring is a short term commitment whilst for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

Carers Queensland Inc. is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of carers in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, geographical location or their cultural and linguistic differences should have the same rights, choices and opportunities and be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family and community life, employment and education like other citizens of the State. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We believe we are in a unique position to advocate on behalf of the 484,400 carers living in Queensland. We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of carers and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means that we are able to provide the Government and industry with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected and acted upon. Our ambition is to ensure that carers are recognised and included as active partners in the development of government health and social policy, legislation and service delivery practices.

This submission reflects the concerns of Queensland's carers, those citizens who provide unpaid care and support to vulnerable family members and friends. This submission has been informed by consultation with Queensland's carers and Australian and international research.

INTRODUCTION

Carers Queensland supports the legalisation of medicinal cannabis for those individuals whose medical conditions do not respond to, or are exacerbated by, traditional treatment options and for whom medicinal cannabis is prescribed.

We offer the following comments for consideration in relation to the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2016.

Throughout the Bill and accompanying Explanatory Notes reference is made to *carer - a person defined as an adult responsible for the immediate care and safety of the patient (p.5)*.

Carers Queensland strongly argues that the meaning of carer in this Bill is being conflated with the term carer as specified in the *Carer (Recognition) Act 2008* (QLD).

We appreciate that the term carer is used in multiple contexts and often with little negative consequence. However, we contend that in relation to this legislation the use of more explicit language is necessary to avoid poor or inappropriate interpretation of the legislation by any or all of the parties to which it relates.

By way of example, *Clauses 55 and 60* refers to the *carer* obtaining and possessing eligible medicinal cannabis for the treatment of the patient etc. It is unclear in both statements as to whether the legislation relates to paid carers employed by a registered facility or institution or informal family and friend carers providing care and support to an individual family member or friend in their own home.

Carers Queensland respectfully recommends that the Bill is re-drafted:

- a. so that the term *carer* is used when referring to informal family and friend carers as specified in the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* (QLD)
- b. to include a new term to relate to paid staff of a registered facility or institution (we suggest *Personal Care Workers* may be an appropriate term)
- c. that all relevant clauses are re-written so as to clearly differentiate between informal family and friend carers and paid staff.

Carers Queensland would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department and the pharmacy sector to develop and promote a comprehensive information campaign to educate family and friend carers on the appropriate aspects of storage, handling, administration and transportation etc. of medicinal cannabis and the requirement to record and maintain suitable records for the purposes of clinical review or audit.