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5 March 2013

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Madam

Re: **STATEMENT BY SUE HODGES TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES**

As a person who lives with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), I thank the Committee for this opportunity to put forward a statement to the Inquiry. Regrettably, I am unable to appear in person.

I was diagnosed with MS in 1983, and the relentless pain has been with me now for 7 years. It has destroyed my quality of life and the only time I have relief is when I am asleep.

My left leg is badly affected – the tightness/spasm is particularly painful from the knee to the buttock muscle. It is therefore difficult to lift this leg and to walk. Because of this, my balance has now been affected and any attempt at exercise only makes my condition worse.

I have been prescribed a range of medication: pain blockers, analgesics and muscle relaxants, none of which have helped me. Some have had very severe and intolerable side effects.

I became aware of clinical trials that have been conducted in the United Kingdom with compound products derived from natural extracts of the cannabis plant.

The trials which have demonstrated positive results in treating spasticity and associated pain in patients with MS, involved an oral spray called Sativex.

I discussed the possibility of obtaining a prescription for the medication with my Neurologist, who investigated the evidence and availability of the medication on my behalf.

Our enquiries revealed that Sativex has been approved for use in the treatment of MS spasticity in some 20 countries. However, it is not legally able to be prescribed in Australia.

On the evidence available to us, I believe there is a very good chance that a cannabinoid product could help improve my condition, and importantly help alleviate my pain.

As a law-abiding citizen, I have no wish to attempt to obtain the medication illegally. I would certainly not wish to self-administer any such medication without appropriate medical supervision.

I am grateful to the NSW Legislative Assembly for opening up this Inquiry. I sincerely hope the Committee will give very serious consideration to the plight of people like me whose lives are affected, and often ruined, by this debilitating disease.

Over 23,000 Australians live with MS. A high proportion of us suffer from some form of spasticity and pain. In many cases, the pain is mild to severe.

I appeal to the Committee to recommend that appropriate regulation be put in place in Australia to allow access to approved, evidence-based, therapeutic cannabis products for medicinal purposes, and in particular, for the treatment of spasticity and pain in people with MS.

Yours faithfully

Sue Hodges (Ms.)

Original Letter Mailed

Enclosure.

**PRESCRIBED MEDICINES
AND 'OVER-THE-COUNTER' PRODUCTS**

Valium
Panadeine Forte
Oxycontin
Baclofen
Gabapentin
Low Dose Naltrexone
Endone

BOTOX

This is administered by injection into hamstring – left leg.
Price: \$500.00 for 100 units. (Not available on PBS)
This is required every three months.

METHYLPREDNISOLONE

This is administered by infusion and helps with MS fatigue, leg pain and walking.
This is also required every three months.

Pain Away Cream + Spray
Dencorub
Panadol
Panadol Osteo
Panadeine
Panadeine Exta
Deep Heat

Fish Oil
Vitamin D3
Magnesium
B Complex

I have spent thousands of dollars, over the years, on medications and 'over-the-counter' products in the search for pain relief.

Sue Hodges (Ms.)