

**Submission
No 87**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL
PURPOSES**

Name: Professor Macciza Macpherson

Date received: 15/02/2013

Submission to the Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4

Inquiry into the use of Cannabis for medical purposes.

Cannabis is a proven safe and effective medicine. This fact is supported by the overwhelming scientific evidence and by the patents and proprietary medicines that are available internationally. The fact that several jurisdictions in Europe and the Americas allows medicinal Cannabis further evidences this fact.

Cannabis should be allowed for medicinal use. The CSIRO is perfectly positioned to play an integral role in this process. This is the system implemented in several European jurisdictions.

Legal problems should not deny the use of Cannabis as medicine
Cannabis for non-medicinal purposes should also be legalized.
This submission will address the particular terms of reference.

1.(a) The efficacy and safety of Cannabis for medical purposes:

Cannabis is a safe and effective medicine in numerous conditions – this undisputed in the International Scientific community, one need only do a quick web search to reveal the huge amount of available information supporting this fact. Cannabis preparations have been used world-wide for thousands of years in almost every Traditional medical system.

Cannabis was a part of Western medicine up until various prohibitions started being introduced almost 100 years ago. It is barely 50 years since it disappeared from our Pharmacopoeias. It is over 25 years since modern science has provided proof of its efficacy, and Cannabis based medicines have been recognized and legally used for decades now.

There are many patents held on various medical preparations and treatments including ones held by the US government. Proprietary medicines made from 'whole of plant' extracts have been available for several years or more, and in addition to synthetic Cannabinoids, such as Dronabinol, are recognized for use in Australia by the TGA.

1.(b) If and how Cannabis should be supplied for medical use:

The most important question is not 'if' Cannabis should be supplied for medical use – that question has already been settled in the affirmative by scientific research across the world and further evidenced by the availability of medicinal Cannabis preparations in many forms throughout most of the Western world.

I believe the best model for 'how' Cannabis should be supplied for medical use would be under some form of State control with the support of the CSIRO. I believe this was recommended by the AFADD Report over 30 years ago, and is the model implemented in various parts of Europe. I believe in the US a system of government supply has operated for a limited number of people for over 30 years as well.

For those wishing to 'grow their own' the CSIRO would be involved in the certification of appropriate seedstock. There are numerous medical strains already available that have been bred locally by expert growers with whom the CSIRO could liaise to establish a program for further research. The CSIRO has experience in breeding Cannabis for a variety of purposes in Australia, with documented evidence of Cannabis field trials in NSW, Queensland and elsewhere since colonization.

1.(c) Legal implications and issues concerning the use of Cannabis for medical purposes:

The medical profession should not be stymied by social mores in the provision of medical treatment when it is proven to be effective. Nor should they be blocked from researching further into the medicinal possibilities of substances merely because they are currently illegal.

If the CSIRO or a similar Statutory board were to monitor/control large-scale production of medical Cannabis then I do not see that there should be a problem. Currently Australia is a major producer of opiate medicines, from our extensive Opium Poppy plantations in Tasmania

1.(d) Any other related matters:

The most pertinent ancillary matter is the non-medicinal or recreational use Cannabis. Due to the fact that naturally occurring endogenous cannabinoids are integral to our homeostasis it could be argued that any use is 'medicinal'. But that is not the case that I wish to present.

Rather I would draw the committee's attention to the wealth of information contained in the official reports that have recommended the removal of criminal prohibitions against Cannabis.

Many jurisdictions have relaxed Cannabis laws so that its' cultivation, possession and use are no longer criminal offences, or subject to only minor penalties. The majority of official enquiries have recommended relaxation of laws against personal use. If personal use for recreational purposes can be tacitly accepted then surely who should empathetically support its legality for personal medicinal use.

If Cannabis could be legitimately grown by adults for personal consumption, many people wishing to medicate with Cannabis would be able to.