



MEDIA RELEASE

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CALL FOR URGENT CANNABIS LAW REFORM

The Legislative Council Committee inquiring into legalised medicinal cannabis today released an Interim Report based on evidence received in 77 written submissions and verbal evidence given by 23 witnesses over three days of public hearings in late September.

Inquiry Chair, the Hon Ruth Forrest MLC, said “the decision to release an Interim Report was based on compelling evidence that urgent legislative change was needed to protect seriously ill medicinal cannabis users and people involved in the supply and administration to these individuals, and also to keep pace with the rapidly changing policy debate on the issue at a State and National level.”

The report acknowledges that the medicinal use of cannabis is a matter of significant national interest and has been raised as an agenda item at recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meetings and both Victoria and New South Wales are moving to set up medical trials.

The Interim Report provides information, received by the Committee, that will assist the State Government with its deliberations at the next COAG meeting.

Ms Forrest reinforced the Committee’s primary concern was that there is a need for immediate legislative reform to protect those people who depend on cannabis to treat serious medical conditions on compassionate grounds where other medical treatments have not provided relief.

“There are a significant number of Tasmanians, including seriously ill children, who are currently using medicinal cannabis for medical conditions in circumstances where other medications have not been effective. These individuals, as well as those supplying and administering the medication, are at risk of prosecution under current Tasmanian law.”

The Committee was informed that the expertise already exists within Tasmania to participate in research and development, cultivation and processing, and the botanical extraction of cannabinoids to produce a quality controlled pharmaceutical product.

“Tasmania risks being left behind in the important and developing area of the cultivation, extraction and processing of cannabinoids for medicinal purposes, which offers economic benefits to our agriculture sector and the broader State economy. What is needed now is the urgent policy and legislative support of the Tasmanian Government to progress this opportunity and provide an economic benefit to the State” Ms Forrest stated.

The Interim Report is available on the parliament of Tasmania website at:
http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/GovAdminA_LMC.htm

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Committee Members

Hon Robert Armstrong MLC

Hon Craig Farrell MLC (Committee Chair)

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Inquiry Chair)

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