



15th August 2014

Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A - Legalised Medicinal Cannabis

Open Letter/Statement

A Letter to Tasmanians regarding the Legislative Council Inquiry into Medical Cannabis

Tasmanian Health Cannabinoids fully supports the Tasmanian Legislative Council's inquiry into the potential benefits and opportunities of medicinal cannabis.

We strongly believe in the benefits of this product.

Patients First

Internationally there are myriad jurisdictions that allow the medical use of cannabis to help treat tens of thousands of individuals suffering from debilitating conditions where medical cannabis has proven to be far more effective than any current treatments.

We believe there is no legitimate reason for Australians to be denied treatments that are available elsewhere, and urge Australian Governments to move quickly to support the use of medicinal cannabis in Australia.

We consider this would not only be good health policy, but good politics.

As Dr Alex Wodak has recently highlighted, more than two thirds of Australians support the use of medicinal cannabis because they see this as a compassionate approach to suffering patients.

Almost three quarters of Australians believe we should be doing more research on medicinal cannabis.

Economic Risk Management

Tasmania faces many economic challenges if we are to provide the jobs, careers and opportunities in our economy for our young people.

The State has led the way in the poppy sector, and we consider this provides a very strong regulatory model for the development of a medicinal cannabis as well. Global demand will continue to rise and Tasmania is ideally placed with some of the most pristine and safe environments in the world to grow product.

Further, there are potentially major investment spin offs ranging from exports, value adding via processing of tinctures and oils, through to investments in new scientific research.

Simply as a matter of economic opportunity the potential of medicinal cannabis requires a more elevated debate from policy makers, rather than a retreat into defensive rejection, often based on a reliance on outmoded prejudices and fears, poor data and a failure of policy imagination.

As the following article shows, Tasmania needs to be mature in its approach to this opportunity, and have a more sophisticated debate about the need for greater diversification for its economy – if only as a simple matter of risk management.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/business/international/tasmania-big-supplier-to-drug-companies-faces-changes.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7b%22%22%3A%22RI%3A15%22%2C%221%22%3A%22RI%3A10%22%7d&r=0>

It's Time for Reform

Tasman Health Cannabinoids believes it's now time to be serious about policy reform.

We are proud of the role we have played in fostering recent community debate in Tasmania and nationally, and provoking this important inquiry.

With inquiries in other States and private members bills being brought before Parliaments, we trust that the momentum is there to achieve sensible and practical reform.

The media in recent months has also covered a range of important stories about ordinary Australians struggling with the current policy settings that effectively makes them criminals – simply for trying to alleviate severe medical conditions.

As Australians we believe folk like Tara O'Connel, Alice Cowles, Dan Haslam, Natalie Daley and Cassie Batten's son Cooper to name a few - deserve far greater respect and compassion from our health policy makers.

For surely health issues should be treated by doctors - not by heavy handed law enforcement and police action. We are sure our police and our courts believe there are better things to do with their time than arresting and charging the ill and the vulnerable.

We look forward to the Council's deliberations and outcomes and trust that Tasmania can be a leader for the whole of Australia in this area.

Dr Mal Washer, Chairman

Troy Langman, CEO