



**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH
MINISTER FOR AGED CARE
MINISTER FOR SPORT**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Landmark medicinal cannabis legislation introduced today

The Turnbull Government will today introduce landmark legislation providing the “missing piece” for Australian patients and their doctors to access a safe, legal and reliable supply of medicinal cannabis products for the management of painful and chronic conditions.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley today announced the amendments to the *Narcotics Drugs Act 1967* would allow the controlled cultivation of cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes through one single national licensing scheme – an Australian first.

Ms Ley said, if passed, this legislation would open the way for Australians with painful and chronic conditions to get access to the relief they needed where this was determined by their doctors to be of potential benefit.

“This is an important day for Australia and the many advocates who have fought long and hard to challenge the stigma around medicinal cannabis products,” Ms Ley said.

“For Australia, this is the missing piece in a patient’s journey.

“Importantly, having a safe, legal and reliable source of products will ensure medical practitioners are now at the centre of the decision making process on whether medicinal cannabis may be beneficial for their patient.”

Ms Ley said the Turnbull Government had worked closely with the states and territories, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders over the past eight weeks to ensure this legislation was “robust” before bringing it to Parliament to give it the best chance of a smooth passage.

“I am also aware of the passion of many MPs and Senators from all sides of politics towards making this happen and I thank them for their contributions so far,” Ms Ley said.

“I sincerely hope the Parliament can continue to work together to pass this legislation in a bipartisan fashion as quickly as possible in the interest of Australian patients seeking access to medicinal cannabis.”

Currently, there are provisions already in place allowing the legal production and distribution of medicinal cannabis products to patients through various means via the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* and the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

This includes authorised prescribers such as specialists working with particular patient groups and clinical trials run by research institutions and state and territory governments.

However, Australia does not currently have a safe, legal and reliable supply of locally-grown cannabis to allow the manufacture of therapeutic products or satisfy this demand, hence why today's legislation has been described as the all-important "missing piece" to patient access.

"I am confident creating one single, nationally-consistent cultivation scheme, rather than eight individual arrangements, will not only help speed up the legislative and regulatory process, but ultimately access to medicinal cannabis products as well," Ms Ley said.

"A national regulator will also allow the Government to closely track the development of cannabis products for medicinal use from cultivation to supply and curtail any attempts by criminals to get involved."

Ms Ley said sharing an exposure draft of the legislation with state and territory governments, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders had ensured feedback and contribution on a range of issues, and was essential to navigating this complex legislative path.

"The legislation also ensures Australia meets all of its international obligations under the *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs*."

Ms Ley said she hoped the legislation would pass in both the House and Senate this sitting of Parliament.

Ms Ley reminded Australians today's announcement did not relate to the decriminalisation of cannabis for general cultivation or recreational use, which remained a law enforcement issue for individual states and territories.

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