



THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Sport
Minister for Aged Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Medicinal cannabis to be cultivated through single national scheme

Australia will create a nationally-consistent licensing scheme regulating the controlled cultivation of cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes that will streamline the process across the country.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley today announced the Commonwealth would now oversee all regulatory aspects of the cultivation of medical cannabis through one national scheme.

Ms Ley said this would remove the need for states and territories to implement legislation to set up individual cultivation schemes and ensure laws were consistent across the country for growers.

The decision follows consultation with state and territory governments and law enforcement agencies over the past month.

“Allowing controlled cultivation locally will provide the critical “missing piece” for a sustainable legal supply of safe medicinal cannabis products for Australian patients in the future,” Ms Ley said.

“The ball is now rolling and we are making sure that happens as quickly and smoothly as possible.

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

Ms Ley said creating a national scheme would see the Commonwealth now put in place legislative amendments to Australia’s *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* that would not require individual state and territory governments to put in place their own complementary legislation for cultivation.

Ms Ley said it would also ensure Australia could be confident of its compliance with international obligations under the *United Nations’ Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961* (Single Convention).

Ms Ley said the Commonwealth would provide states and territories, law enforcement agencies and Federal parliamentarians with an exposure draft outlining the proposed legislative changes for further consultation from this week.

“We want to not only ensure these legislative amendments are rock solid, but that we can all work together to pass them in a bipartisan fashion as quickly as possible.

“The important point is legislative changes are drafted and we’ve hit the start button for change.”

Ms Ley said the Government had therefore decided, in consultation with state and territory Governments, to introduce legislation in the first sitting period of 2016 to allow comments on the exposure draft to be considered in full over the next couple of months.

Ms Ley said she did not expect the change in approach to impact on the original proposed timeline to debate the legislative amendments in Parliament early next year.

Ms Ley said introducing a national cultivation scheme would also align with the national approaches to the manufacture and supply of medical cannabis that were already in place in Australia under the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* and the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

Ms Ley said today’s announcement did not relate to the decriminalisation of cannabis for recreational use, which remained a law enforcement issue for individual states and territories.

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