



# Meegan Fitzharris MLA

Member for Yerrabi

Minister for Health

Minister for Transport and City Services

Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research

Mr Tom Duncan

Clerk of the ACT Legislative Assembly

Office of the Legislative Assembly

GPO Box 1020

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Duncan *Tom,*

I refer to the ACT Legislative Assembly Petition 1-16 sponsored by Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA regarding Medical Cannabis and am pleased to provide my response.

You would be aware that on 4 August 2016 I announced that the ACT Government will work to establish an evidence-based Medicinal Cannabis Scheme (the Scheme) in the ACT. The Scheme will allow eligible patients safe and legal access to high quality medicinal cannabis products via prescription.

In addition, the Government will appoint two expert advisory committees from across the spectrum of government agencies, non-government agencies, medical specialists and law enforcement to address the issues associated with the introduction of the Scheme – including providing advice to government on the broader economic, legal and social issues and opportunities related to the introduction of a Medicinal Cannabis Scheme. I called for Expressions of Interest for the first of these, the Medicinal Cannabis Medical Advisory Panel, in December 2016 and will shortly recruit to the second committee, the Medicinal Cannabis Advisory Group.

On 1 November 2016, the Therapeutic Goods Administration implemented a decision to down schedule medicinal cannabis from Schedule 9 (prohibited substance) to Schedule 8 (controlled drug). This has the immediate effect of making medicinal cannabis (when produced in accordance with Commonwealth legislation) a controlled medicine which can be prescribed in the ACT with Chief Health Officer approval.

In order to prescribe cannabis as a controlled medicine, doctors are required to obtain authority from the ACT Chief Health Officer under the same process which currently applies for other controlled medicines such as opiates and amphetamines. Only registered medical practitioners can apply for an authority to prescribe a controlled medicine for one of their patients. An Application for Approval to Prescribe Medicinal Cannabis is available on the ACT Health website.

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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I note that amendments made to the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* (Cwlth) mean that only the Commonwealth Office of Drug Control has the authority to license the cultivation of medicinal cannabis in Australia.

I look forward to providing the community with further updates as work towards the implementation of the Scheme progresses. We are working closely with other jurisdictions as well as at a national level to ensure the introduction of medicinal cannabis allows eligible patients safe and legal access to high quality medicinal cannabis products.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meegan Fitzharris', written in a cursive style.

Meegan Fitzharris MLA  
Minister for Health

20/2/2017