

25 August 2014

Victorians suffering terminal disease, intense pain or debilitating conditions should have access to pharmaceutical cannabis under prescription.

The Australian Drug Foundation has congratulated the Victorian Labor Party for [yesterday committing to investigating options](#)

National Policy Manager Geoff Munro said some serious and debilitating conditions have been proven to be relieved by use of cannabis with low levels of THC, and he is pleased the policy platform rules out the smoking of crude cannabis.

"As a compassionate society, there is no reason to prevent doctors prescribing pharmaceutical cannabis to those people for whom other medication has not provided relief," Mr Munro said.

"The medically supervised use of other drugs, including heavy opiates which are very similar to heroin, is common-place in our community. It's time we introduced the therapeutic use of cannabis for people who lack other alternatives and who suffer badly.

"We take note of the medical principle of 'doing no harm'. So while we support using pharmaceutical cannabis to reduce pain and suffering in a small group of people, we cannot ignore the strong evidence which shows it can damage mental health and cause harm.

"Australia must avoid the model of medical marijuana in the United States, where it is de facto legalisation and there is little control over its availability to the general population.

"It has led to the proliferation of cannabis products including confectionery and soft drinks which

will appeal to children, and risks establishing Big Marijuana as a third addictive industry after Big Tobacco and Big Alcohol."

The Australian Drug Foundation would support a system of pharmaceutical cannabis only if it included the following conditions:

- the patient is diagnosed by a medical specialist, or a physician, as suffering from an ailment that the medical evidence suggests is likely to be relieved by pharmaceutical cannabis, for example: conditions are pain or other debilitating conditions associated with terminal illness, neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy treatment,
- the patient remains under the supervision of a medical specialist or physician so that their physical and mental health is monitored so that appropriate action can be taken if the use of pharmaceutical cannabinoids appears to have an unduly detrimental effect on the individual's quality of life,
- the patient's condition has proved resistant to conventional therapies and interventions,
- the patient agrees to the self-use only of the pharmaceutical cannabis and not to transfer it to any other person,
- the establishment of a 'medical cannabis review board' to oversee the therapeutic use of cannabis,
- that continuing research is conducted into the efficacy and safety of cannabis products for therapeutic purposes.

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