

THE HAPPY HERB COMPANY

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Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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**Submission from the Happy Herb Company
regarding the Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014**

1. ***Initial points***

- 1.1. Cannabis is among the safest, least toxic, most effective and most studied (20,000 academic papers¹) therapeutic substances in history. There are very few if any negative implications of allowing wider access to it.
- 1.2. As a prominent establishment in the Australian phytomedicinal industry, the Happy Herb Company (*HHC*) has come into contact with a great number of sick individuals and their families and carers throughout Australia who are forced to suffer needlessly due to the prohibition of this plant.² This arises due to both the difficulty in obtaining a consistent product through the black market and the potential for legal ramifications involved.
- 1.3. Thus any compassionate and rational approach to the issue of medicinal cannabis is very welcome, and HHC commends this effort to make this plant more easily and widely available to those that would benefit from its use. We urge that the Committee does whatever is in its power to ensure that legislation is altered to this end in a fair, efficacious and timely manner.

1 <http://blog.norml.org/2010/07/01/theres-been-over-20000-studies-on-marijuana-what-is-it-that-scientists-do-not-yet-know/>

2 It's assumed that other submissions to the Committee will cover the relevant illnesses in question and the medical benefits of cannabis in relation to these.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cannabis is a pharmacologically complex medicinal plant. Different genetic strains contain varying ratios of cannabinoids and therefore are more or less suited to different illnesses.

Individual cannabinoids appear to function in tandem with each other and with the body's endocannabinoid system (ie: internally produced cannabinoids) through a synergistic or 'ensemble' effect.

This means that cannabinoids cannot easily be isolated and evaluated on an individual basis using the same criteria that apply to most pharmaceutical drugs; thus **provision must be made for patients' use of the whole plant and derivatives thereof.**

- 2.2. The process of undertaking clinical trials to establish the safety and efficacy of pharmaceutical products takes years to complete and is very expensive. This is a contributing factor to the high expense of many of these products.

We believe it is incumbent upon the legislature to **strongly curtail the scope for medicinal cannabis to be monopolised by the pharmaceutical industry**, due in part to the following facts:

- a) pharmaceutical testing procedures are not suitable to evaluate cannabis products (see point 2.1 above);
- b) cannabis has been proven to be an extremely safe and non-toxic substance;
- c) there exist numerous adults and children who require expedited access to cannabis in order to reduce or eliminate their suffering and in some cases save their lives; and
- c) cannabis can easily be grown and processed into cost-effective medicinal products.

- 2.3. In light of the above, **people should be allowed to grow their own medicine** under a scheme that allows for individual, collective and commercial licenses - without prohibitive cost.

This would pave the way for a healthy ecology of producers developing and refining useful strains of medicinal cannabis, giving Australia the opportunity to become a leading player in this emerging global economy.

- 2.4. Licenses for the manufacture of medicinal cannabis products should be available without prohibitive cost, given the establishment of a suitable screening and certification program.

- 2.5. A licensing scheme for dispensary networks should be formulated. Distribution of medical cannabis should not be restricted solely to pharmacies.

- 2.6. It is apparent that prevalent attitudes amongst the medical establishment constitute a barrier to the legalisation of medicinal cannabis. Based on consultation with our wide customer base, we understand that many medical practitioners are ignorant of the medical efficacy of cannabis and are prejudiced against the use of non pharmaceutical

medicines. For this reason **educational campaigns aimed at the medical industry are of paramount importance.**

Concurrently, campaigns aimed at alternative health practitioners and the general public will be necessary to ensure that balanced accurate information is widely available. This would encourage people to only utilise cannabis under the appropriate circumstances, without viewing it as either a demonic drug on one hand or a miraculous panacea on the other.

3. *Caveat:*

In light of points 1.1 & 1.2 above, the Committee may also wish to consider the possibility that the expense of instigating more laws and more bureaucracy could be considered an overcomplicated and potentially problematic solution to an issue which **could conceivably be solved by relaxing existing laws and schedules.**

However, there are still widespread public fears associated with cannabis³, thus aiming for evidence-based reform of existing drug laws would likely be too optimistic a strategy to be worth following.

4. *About the Happy Herb Company*

“Promoting the appreciation, information, benefits, culture, use, and availability of all natural plants and herbs.”

Happy Herb Shops can be found all around the country, with over 40 locations across Australia and the USA. We stock a wide range of medicinal herbs, herbal extracts and other exclusive natural products.

Many of our shops also offer consultations with qualified herbalists, naturopaths and health practitioners. As a not-only-for-profit business, the company is proud to donate a percentage of its profits towards social enterprise ventures to further support local and international communities.

³ This is in spite of the fact that cannabis was extremely popular as a therapeutic agent until the advent of its demonisation and prohibition which occurred due to a range of factors in the latter half of the 20th century - most notably in the form of a hysterical propaganda campaign that was mounted by synthetic textile manufacturers.