

**Victorian Government submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014**

The Victorian Government recognises that many people with terminal illnesses or life-threatening conditions want to use medicinal cannabis to relieve their pain and treat their conditions, but cannot legally do so.

The Victorian Government has committed to investigating legislative reform options to allow people to be treated with medicinal cannabis in exceptional circumstances. The use of medicinal cannabis is a matter of high sensitivity and complexity.

In December 2014, the Victorian Attorney-General referred this matter to the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC). The terms of reference asked the VLRC to review and report on options for changes to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* and associated Regulations to allow people to be treated with medicinal cannabis in exceptional circumstances, and to make recommendations for any consequential amendments which should be made to the *Therapeutic Goods (Victoria) Act 2010* and any other relevant legislation.

In conducting the review the VLRC will also consider:

- a) the operation of Victoria's *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* and associated Regulations, and how this interacts with Commonwealth law, functions and any relevant international conventions
- b) the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes in other jurisdictions.

To support the VLRC's inquiry expert panels have been appointed to examine:

- a) prescribing practices for medicinal cannabis, including eligibility criteria for access to medicinal cannabis and the role of doctors in managing the use of medicinal cannabis by patients
- b) the regulation of medicinal cannabis manufacture and distribution, including which forms of medicinal cannabis should be permitted for use.

The VLRC has released an issues paper and has invited public submissions, prior to delivering a final report by the end of August 2015.

The Victorian Government is committed to working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories, to share information on issues relating to the use of appropriate therapeutic products derived from cannabis.

The Victorian Government will consider the recommendations made by the VLRC before forming a final position on the proposed Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014.

If the Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014 progresses, the Victorian Government will seek to further engage with the Commonwealth Government regarding issues raised in the Bill. In particular, consideration will need to be given to the scope of the Regulator's proposed functions and the interaction between the operation of Victoria's legislation and any new proposed national regulatory framework.