

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for seeking comments for the inquiry into the Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014.

The Eros Association commends the Bill drafters for this piece of legislation. Overall it looks like it will achieve the goals it sets out:

“The Regulator will be responsible for formulating rules for licensing the production, manufacture, supply, use, experimental use and import and export of medicinal cannabis. The Regulator has powers to monitor compliance with this Bill and also to investigate breaches.”

This regulator, with its independent committee of relevant professionals, provides a method of sensibly regulating medicinal cannabis. Considering the significant knowledge that will be gained by this regulator in one place, it would be an appropriate institution to streamline the dissemination of research and information about cannabis broadly.

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre was originally established to inform the community about the harms of cannabis. Rather than having two potentially competing and/or contradictory authorities on cannabis, this Bill could be amended to have a provision for an education and information outlet which brings together the expertise learned by the other arms of the regulator.

To ensure that the regulator is able to do its job effectively and from a sound evidence base, the Bill should take into consideration that those working in the regulator need to be able to access the leading, highest quality information on cannabis.

Why not amalgamate the NCPIC into this regulator to both save costs and streamline information on cannabis? This would ensure that those working for the regulator are well informed when doing their jobs and are able to disseminate high quality information to the public.

There is currently no reference to which portfolio nor which Minister will be responsible for the regulator. This could lead to a situation where the regulator is rendered ineffective by a portfolio with interests outside of the health of Australian citizens. This regulator would clearly fall under the scope of the health portfolio and should be legislated as such.

The Bill leaves open the question of how medicinal cannabis would be distributed. If distribution is heavily restricted, many patients could have a lot of difficulty with securing supply, meaning they may still turn to the black market and to a non-regulated product. There must be a provision to allow medicinal cannabis dispensaries to set up without overbearing red tape creating difficult barriers to entry into this market.

Ensuring that the supply chain effectively meets demand ought to be one of the top priorities of the regulator to avoid market failures.

Kind regards,

Nick Wallis
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