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2 November 2023

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

To the Committee Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into the Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023

ABOUT US

Astrid was founded in 2020 by Lisa Nguyen (B. Pharm), a clinical pharmacist with extensive experience in the medicinal cannabis industry. We are committed to providing exceptional patient care by focusing on education, support, compliance, advocacy and transparency.

As a company that is primarily led by pharmacists, we value patient safety in both the medical and adult use of cannabis. This year, Astrid was awarded both Dispensary of the Year and Company of the Year at industry's Cannabiz awards. We welcome this opportunity from the Committee to provide comments on the Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023.

LEGALISATION OF CANNABIS IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is witnessing diverse approaches to the legalisation and decriminalisation of cannabis. We view this trend positively, emphasising the paramount importance of public health in all discussions related to cannabis legalisation in our country. This is positive and public health promotion should be at the heart of all discussions around the legalisation of cannabis in Australia.

There is an increased use of cannabis and widespread public support for changing legislation to permit the use of cannabis. Recent years have seen a surge in cannabis use and widespread public support for changing legislation to permit its use. Between 2016 and 2019, both lifetime and recent cannabis use increased significantly. In 2019, 36% of Australians (7.6 million people) had used it in their lifetime, and 11.6% had used it in the last 12 months, up from 10.4%. Astrid Dispensary recognises the evolving perspective of the Australian community on cannabis. Our commitment lies in establishing a framework that enhances public safety amidst these changing attitudes.

OVERVIEW OF THE LEGALISING CANNABIS BILL 2023

- We agree with the creation of a Cannabis Australian National Agency (CANA) that will determine the packaging, labelling and storage requirements for cannabis products. We seek further clarity within the

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Bill and the role of CANA in regulating cannabis products. **Recommendation: Reasonable steps must be considered for licence holders who are manufacturing products, ie. surveillance and security measures and records that must be kept.**

- Further to the manufacturing of cannabis products, we seek clarity around the supply of cannabis products. **Recommendation: To establish guidelines around the supply of cannabis (ie. monthly limits, and incorporate potency levels for THC), to ensure patient safety.**
- In reference to **Clause 29 and conditions for licences - general**, and the Responsible Service of Cannabis, we urge for clarity around the rules of "Responsible Service of Cannabis."
Recommendation: Training should be mandatory for any personnel that is selling and/or providing information on cannabis within an adult use framework.
- Other recommendations to be considered:
 - We encourage the consideration of a **public health promotion campaign** funded by the Federal Government so that the general public is informed and educated on the potential health risks and consequences associated with the use of cannabis, particularly young people;
 - Other than the establishment of CANA, we strongly encourage for the Government to consider an **Advisory Committee** that will provide advice on the development of the Bill and plan to allow an adult use framework in Australia;
 - We recommend for **drug driving laws** to be amended across all States and territories and to ensure that best measures are considered to ensure that there is a standard of measuring impairment from cannabis.
 - We ask for the Federal Government to ensure that access to health and social services are improved to address any issues associated with cannabis use; and
 - We recommend for controls to be put in place to control potency and content of cannabis products

CONCLUSION

We see the Legalising Cannabis Bill 2023 as a great step forward in drug law reform for Australia, in allowing adult recreational use of cannabis. The move towards an adult use framework in this country creates a huge chance of creating jobs, an opportunity to create a regional industry as well as a huge chance to reduce interaction with the illicit market. At Astrid, we strongly support an adult use of cannabis framework that focuses on safety, harm reduction, consumer safety and health risks.

Norhawa Bee Mohamed Ismail
Head of Patient Advocacy & Government Relations
Astrid Dispensary and Clinic