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13 March, 2015  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

***Re: Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014***

The Australian Christian Lobby welcomes this opportunity to comment on the *Regulator of Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2014*.

ACL supports scientific trials of cannabis for medicinal purposes. If cannabis has a genuine palliative effect that other drugs cannot provide, it should be available to patients in the same way other medications are.

However, ACL is concerned by the bill's intention to regulate the cultivation, production, and distribution of cannabis.

ACL notes the statement from the Australian Medical Association calling for a coordinated national approach. Commenting after NSW Premier Mike Baird announced a process of establishing clinical trials, the AMA urged a "consistent approach across the country about regulating marijuana or cannabis as a medicine rather than as a drug".<sup>1</sup>

AMA has also warned against legalising "the raw dope plant, or any oils and tinctures made from it", urging that "only fully-tested cannabis-based medicines" should be permitted.<sup>2</sup>

AMA Victoria President Dr Tony Bartone has warned against "legalising the plant for medicinal purposes" and stated "there were great variations in the composition of leaves not commercially grown and harvested that could expose users to harm".<sup>3</sup>

ACL repeats AMA's concerns that cannabis undergo the same testing to the same standards as any other new medicine.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Rollins (30 September, 2014), *Put medicinal cannabis to the test: AMA*, Australian Medical Association, <https://ama.com.au/ausmed/put-medicinal-cannabis-test-ama>.

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Rollins (28 October, 2014), *Govts back historic cannabis trial*, Australian Medical Association, <https://ama.com.au/ausmed/govts-back-historic-cannabis-trial>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

ACL also notes the AMA's position statement on cannabis use, which gives a long list of adverse short-term and long-term side effects, including particularly egregious mental health outcomes. Schizophrenia and psychosis are highlighted as being linked to cannabis use. Although noting the "therapeutic potential" of cannabis, AMA states its use is "still experimental".<sup>4</sup>

Sincerely,

***Martyn Iles***  
***Chief-of-Staff***

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Medical Association (1 May, 2014), *AMA Position Statement: Cannabis Use and Health – 2014*, <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/cannabis-use-and-health-2014>.