

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 May 2017

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OUTCOME: 5 - Regulation, Safety and Protection

Topic: Special Access Scheme

Type of Question: Hansard Page 105, 29 May 2017

Senator: Singh, Lisa

Question:

Senator SINGH: How many licences have you?

Dr Skerritt: Are you talking about the licences for cultivation in Australia, or are you talking about approval of a medicine through TGA so, for example, it can be dispensed at every suburban pharmacy? Sorry, I am a bit unclear of your question.

Senator SINGH: Under the national licensing scheme, I presume.

Dr Skerritt: The national licensing scheme is registration of medicines—that is one thing. I think what you are talking about is approval of licences for the cultivation of medicinal cannabis in Australia. I am just trying to clarify the question.

Senator SINGH: I would like both figures, to be honest.

Dr Skerritt: Okay, we will give you both. I might call my colleague, Bill Turner, to the table.

Senator SINGH: And a breakdown by category and state would be useful.

Mr Turner: There are three types of licences under the scheme. One is called the medicinal cannabis licence. That is for cultivation of cannabis for use in humans, through the Special Access Scheme, authorised prescribers or clinical trials. Seven of those licences have been issued. There is the cannabis research licence, which allows research into the plant and its medicinal properties. Three of those have been issued. And there is the manufacture licence, which allows the extraction of the cannabinoids. Two of those have been issued, at this time. With respect to state by state, can I take that on notice? I have the figures as a breakdown but we do not, generally, release those—because there are commercial sensitivities as well as security issues with location, so I would like to consider that before releasing those figures.

Senator SINGH: If I could ask for it to be taken on notice and then the committee can consider the answer as far as our release of the information—is that something we could do, in relation to this?

Answer:

The Department of Health does not release state by state breakdowns on the number of licences granted under the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*, as it may lead to identification of the physical location of particular cultivation facilities of which would be undesirable from a security perspective. Licensing is subject to strict security provisions to protect public health by preventing diversion of narcotic drug.

Companies are prevented from advertising cultivation sites; however they are not prevented from making public announcements about receiving licences provided they do not release the address of the cultivation site.

As at 9 May 2017, there have been announcements in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia.

As at 30 June 2016, the total number of licences now stands at 15. This includes 8 medicinal cannabis licences, 4 research licences, and 3 manufacture licences that have been issued under the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*.