

9 May 2023

Pothida Youhorn
Committee Secretary

Via email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Pothida,

Re: Inquiry into Improving Access to Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Improving Access to Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2023.

The Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM), Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (College) is the professional organisation for specialist pain medicine physicians (fellows) and specialist pain medicine physicians in training (trainees). FPM is responsible for the training, examination and specialist accreditation of specialist pain medicine physicians and for the standards of clinical practice for pain medicine in Australia and New Zealand. The College's purpose is "to serve our communities by leading high quality care in anaesthesia, perioperative and pain medicine, optimising health and reducing the burden of pain".

The Bill aims to improve access to the putative benefits of cannabinoid products, in particular to stop prescription via the Special Access Scheme requirements for unapproved products and list any cannabinoid product as a Schedule 4 medicine. FPM remains of the opinion that the use of these products for pain management (currently the largest recorded reason for prescribing) is not recommended outside of clinical trials due to the lack of evidence of benefit in the weight of studies to date, as well as the lack of standardization in manufacturing and unknown long and short-term health effects in these formulations. The proposed change would remove currently appropriate restrictions on their use, and also lead to less data collection about prescribing rates and indications. There are far more efficacious and safe treatments that FPM would like to see funded by MBS and PBS in preference to cannabinoids.

Should you wish clarification of any of these comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kieran Davis
Dean, Faculty of Pain Medicine

Associate Professor Michael Vagg
DPA FPM Professional Affairs