

Dear Community Affairs Legislation Committee,

My name is [redacted] and both my wife, and I are medicinal cannabis patients. I have generalised anxiety and insomnia caused by PTSD and Bipolar effective disorder. I have tried many medications including SSRI's, benzodiazepines, and antipsychotics to calm my mind. I have also done years of psychotherapy and neurofeedback. Cannabis oil (CBD oil) is the first thing that really works for me, without it slowly becoming less effective over time. For the first time in years, I feel that I can work a full time job. I qualified as a social worker in 2020 but was unable to feel like I could work in such a demanding field. My view has changed because of this medication.

My wife has Systemic Lupus and Inclusion Body Myositis. Cannabis oil reduces the pain and inflammation that she suffers from. She has tried rituximab infusions; traditional pain killers and she has been a patient at the Princess Alexandra Hospital Pain Clinic. Before she went on Cannabis oil, she struggled to get through her daily tasks. She is able to go into the office at work more often and do "normal" things like shopping. Things aren't perfect, but I have seen a massive change in her.

Previously, I was on CBD in 2020/2021 but discontinued it due to the costs of the medication. I was being charged \$269 for 10ml of oil derived from a plant. The doctor that prescribed it (from Cannabis Doctors Australia) disclosed his potential conflicts of interests. These were, partly owning the cannabis cultivation business, owning the pharmacy which distributes the medication and owning the practice. I don't think it was possible to get cannabis oil from a generic or external company through this clinic.

I now get my cannabis oil from Rise Dispensary/Pharmaceutical Rehabilitation Services in [redacted]. They charge \$175 for 50ml of oil, which lasts about a month. But you need to also consider the cost of seeing the doctor. For the initial consultation, they charge \$200 with a Medicare rebate \$76.95 with subsequent consultations of \$75 with a \$39.75 rebate. When you have two adults both of whom are prescribed cannabis oil and are seeing the doctor, this becomes expensive. I believe it is the biggest expense outside of our mortgage.

People in Australia shouldn't effectively be financially penalised for accessing a medication that can drastically change their lives, making them more productive, but more importantly healthy and happy members of society. There are already so many financial burdens that Australian's are facing that they weren't one and a half years ago. Please don't make other Australian's feel like I did when I stopped taking my medication because of financial pressures. After all, I can vouch that as medicinal cannabis patients, my wife and I have tried every other treatment that was offered to us first.

I think that cannabis oils that are derived from cannabis plants containing 1% THC or less and up to 10% CBD should be de-scheduled as proposed and pharmacists should be able to administer this medication. I believe all doctors should be trained in medical cannabis and that steps should be taken to stop big business taking over medicinal cannabis. According to The University of Sydney¹ only 37% of people using cannabis for medicinal purposes attain it through legal means. I believe this bill will increase the proportion of people who access medicinal cannabis through legal channels increasing public safety and promoting harm reduction.

With regards,

1. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2022/08/24/legal-use-of-medicinal-cannabis-on-the-rise-.html>