



**Katy Gallagher MLA**

**CHIEF MINISTER**

MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO



Dr Chris Bourke MLA  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services  
ACT Legislative Assembly

[committee@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:committee@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Dr Bourke *Chris*

Thank you for your letter of 15 September 2014 regarding preliminary arrangements for a private briefing regarding the Inquiry into the exposure draft of the Drugs of Dependence (Cannabis Use for Medical Purposes) Amendment Bill 2014.

I appreciate the courtesy extended by the Standing Committee in advising me of this meeting.

I have recently written to the Hon Mike Baird, NSW Premier and to the Federal Minister for Health, Mr Peter Dutton with respect to the use of cannabis for medical purposes. Copies of both letters are attached for your information.

I do not have any comment to make at this stage. I note relevant ACT Health officials have made themselves available for your discussions on 16 October 2014.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher MLA  
Minister for Health

08 OCT 2014

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2601 GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6205 0840 Fax: (02) 6205 3030 Email: [gallagher@act.gov.au](mailto:gallagher@act.gov.au)  
Facebook: [KatyGallagherMLA](https://www.facebook.com/KatyGallagherMLA) Twitter: [@katyGMLA](https://twitter.com/katyGMLA)





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MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

The Hon Peter Dutton MP  
Minister for Health  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Email: Minister.Dutton@health.gov.au

Dear Minister 

I write to raise with you the issue of medical cannabis and the need in my view for a national approach to the issue.

As you would be aware, public calls for the legalisation of cannabis for medical purposes have escalated over recent months as a result of a series of media reports highlighting cases where its use is thought to have assisted individuals suffering lifelong and/or terminal illnesses.

I am sympathetic to the calls by families to be able to ease the suffering of loved ones through administering cannabis products. I have sought advice from ACT Health officials who have raised with me concerns about the lack of evidence to support the use of cannabis for medical purposes, public health concerns, and risks that could arise by simply decriminalising the possession and use of cannabis by people who have terminal or lifelong illnesses.

Health officials have also raised concern about possible side effects, and the need for a regulated clinical trial to take place prior to any final policy position being determined. Supply also remains an overarching issue that would need to be addressed.

The recent media coverage involving the case of a young child whose family lives in Sydney has highlighted to me that the response on this issue needs to be consistent across Australia.

For that reason, I am writing to seek your views on the Commonwealth taking a lead on developing a policy response to this issue, considering the administrative and regulatory responsibilities for agencies such as the Department of Health, the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

One possible way forward may be for the National Health and Medical Research Council to support the conduct of a clinical trial, perhaps involving some of the individuals who have shared their cases publicly through the media over recent months. I also seek your views on the Therapeutic Goods Administration providing advice on how a licensing regime for the production of cannabis products for medical and/or palliative purposes could be introduced in the event that a decision was reached to proceed along those lines, based on the evidence of a clinical trial.

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London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2601 GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6205 0840 Fax: (02) 6205 3030 Email: gallagher@act.gov.au  
Facebook: KatyGallagherMLA Twitter: @katyGMLA



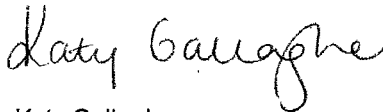
Subject to consultation with the medical professions, these products could then be made available on prescription, thereby reducing some of the public health and safety risks associated with unregulated supply.

Another way forward could be for a national summit bringing together chief health officers together with key stakeholders to discuss the issue, and identify a strategic approach to the development of a a national policy response.

I am aware that there is legislation before the NSW Parliament, the Federal Senate and very soon the ACT Legislative Assembly. This is not an issue that is going to disappear and I believe it warrants a national approach from the combined governments. As such, I am copying this letter to all health ministers for their information. I will also seek to raise it as an agenda item at the next meeting of the COAG Health Council, and have asked the Director-General of ACT Health to raise the issue through the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

I look forward to your early response on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Katy Gallagher

05 AUG 2014



## Katy Gallagher MLA

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MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

The Hon Mike Baird MP  
Premier  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear *Mike* Premier

I read with interest your announcement on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014 of the NSW Government's decision to establish a clinical trial of medical cannabis for people suffering terminal and debilitating illnesses. I am writing to canvas the ACT Government's interest in the ACT joining with NSW on the trial, including membership on the working group established to set up the clinical trial.

The ACT Government is sympathetic to the calls by families to be able to ease the suffering of loved ones through administering cannabis products. I have sought advice from ACT Health officials who have raised with me concerns about the lack of evidence to support the use of cannabis for medical purposes, public health concerns, and risks that could arise by simply decriminalising the possession and use of cannabis by people who have terminal or lifelong illnesses.

Health officials also raised concern about possible side effects, and the need for a regulated clinical trial to take place prior to any final policy position being determined. Supply also remains an issue that would need to be addressed.

I recently wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for Health raising the option of the Commonwealth taking a lead on developing a national policy response to this issue. In my letter I suggested a national approach to a clinical trial and a licensing regime for the production of cannabis products for medical and/or palliative purposes that could be introduced in the event that a decision was reached to proceed based on the evidence of a clinical trial. Subject to consultation with the medical professions, these products could then be made available on prescription, thereby reducing some of the public health and safety risks associated with unregulated supply.

I also flagged the option of a national summit bringing together chief health officers together with key stakeholders to discuss the issue, and identify a strategic approach to the development of a national policy response.

I understand that the Assistant Minister for Health will be responding to my letter in the near future.

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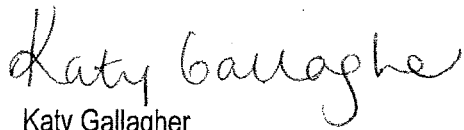
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Phone: (02) 6205 0840 Fax: (02) 6205 3030 Email: [gallagher@act.gov.au](mailto:gallagher@act.gov.au)  
Facebook: [KatyGallagherMLA](https://www.facebook.com/KatyGallagherMLA) Twitter: [@katyGMLA](https://twitter.com/katyGMLA)



In the meantime, community concern about this issue continues to grow. I am aware that there is legislation before a number of Parliaments throughout Australia, including both NSW and the ACT. This is an issue that the community feels strongly about and I believe it warrants a considered approach across all governments. As NSW and the ACT are geographically linked, I believe a combined approach to a clinical trial would be mutually beneficial to communities in both of our jurisdictions. I also believe it would allow for shared expertise and the development of a policy that could be implemented seamlessly across our borders.

I look forward to your early response on this matter. I would be happy to discuss with you in more detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katy Gallagher".

Katy Gallagher  
Chief Minister

17 SEP 2014