

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health, Ageing Community and Social Services,
ACT Legislative Assembly.

Re: Proposed Drugs of Dependence (Cannabis Use for Medical Purposes)
Amendment Bill 2014

I make this submission to support the proposed Drugs of Dependence
(Cannabis Use for Medical Purposes) Amendment Bill 2014.

I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) more than 20 years ago, and have been unable to work since then. I suffered from the illness undiagnosed for about 10 years before that. The illness has gradually worsened over this period. As I'm sure you're aware, CFS is a poorly understood disease, with unknown aetiology, variable symptoms and disputed treatment protocols.

In my case my symptoms are mostly in the categories of fatigue, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome. I have found cannabis to be beneficial in all three of these categories, to a much greater extent than any prescription or over-the-counter medication I have tried. I have described the benefits I've found cannabis has in alleviating each symptom below.

*Fatigue - It may seem paradoxical that cannabis can counter fatigue, given its reputation, but experience in California and other places that allow medical marijuana use indicate that it can. I've found that with moderate use I have much more energy and am able to do housework and gardening, and take some exercise. These are often too difficult otherwise. The exercise, of course, provides innumerable benefits, and helps to stave off other health issues. House-work and gardening help me to support my family materially and boosts my self-esteem - a problem for anyone with chronic illness.

*Fibromyalgia - The use of cannabis for treating pain is well known. In my case it helps with the pain of fibromyalgia much more than other pain medications I use, and again contributes significantly to increased activity levels. The lessening of chronic pain also improves my mental health significantly. Interestingly, cannabis also reduces the frequency and intensity of the headaches that accompany the CFS. That's a great relief.

*Irritable Bowel Syndrome - Once more, experience from other jurisdictions that allow medicinal use of cannabis show that it can be beneficial for some digestive-system disorders, and I have found personally that when I use it, (sorry to be blunt) my bowels are much better behaved. This might seem trivial or even humorous, but for someone who suffers the problem it's a big deal.

Another benefit I've found to the use of cannabis is that it counteracts a lot of

the 'flattening of affect' from the anti-depressants I'm prescribed (anti-depressants are very often prescribed for CFS). This increases my enjoyment of life immensely, from the appreciation of music, art and reading, to interacting with family and friends and taking an interest in the world around me.

In short, the use of cannabis reduces the severity and frequency of my symptoms to a far greater degree than other medications available, allows me much more activity than I am otherwise capable of, which means I am able to contribute more, and immeasurably improves my quality of life. Without it I can endure, but with it I can live.

I would be happy to appear as a witness at the public hearing for the Amendment Bill if this is useful.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature block]