

MEDICINAL CANNABIS PROGRESS REPORT

LETTER TO RANSLEY DIGEST EMAIL GROUP

From: John Ransley [mailto:jeransley@bigpond.com]
Sent: Sunday, 1 May 2016 11:03 AM
To: 'John Ransley (jeransley@gmail.com)'
Subject: Medicinal Cannabis Submission

MEDICINAL CANNABIS SUBMISSION

Attached: QCCL_SupSubAdd_Public_Health_Medicinal_Cannabis_Bill_2016_JER.pdf

Hello there

The attachment may be of interest to some of you. It is a submission I wrote for the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties to the Queensland Department of Health concerning a Draft Bill to legalise medicinal cannabis. It is my fourth submission to Australian governments on cannabis since 1993.

I am copying this email to a wider group than usual because it is clear that cannabis can provide significant relief from unnecessary suffering, whether it be for people with terminal illnesses, or children with intractable epilepsy, and this should be publicised as widely as possible.

It's all a bit complicated, and hence my submission is quite long, 21 pages. If you don't have time to read it, my conclusion is that if the Draft Bill is translated into legislation without any changes—the most likely option—it will not work. Compelling support for this conclusion is to be found in the only other state legislation seeking to make medicinal cannabis available, that of Victoria.

A couple of serendipitous events deserve a passing comment.

First, this whole current Australian movement to legalise medicinal was started when the terminally ill son of a former head of the Tamworth drug squad discovered that a few puffs on a 'street cannabis' joint gave him 'amazing' relief from the symptoms of his chemotherapy and advanced bowel cancer. Ben Haslam's mother Lucy Haslam, clearly an extraordinary person, was then instrumental in convincing a string of conservative politicians, including NSW premier Mike Baird and the federal health minister Sussan Ley, that medicinal cannabis should be legalised. See my submission for more on this, but of course one of the reasons there was even an opening for this to be considered was the legalisation of medicinal cannabis in 20-plus states in America.

Second, once a month the *Australian Financial Review* publishes a large format glossy magazine that includes fashion photos not quite up to *Vogue* standard but getting there, and a handful of feature articles thought to be of interest to our country's business elite. The May16 issue has a front page article about Katelyn Lambert, a 4-year old whose Dravet syndrome symptoms are being successfully treated with (illegal) cannabis oil. This would not be an exceptional story—many parents around the country are treating epileptic children with cannabis oils—except Katelyn's grandfather is 'BRW Rich Lister' Barry Lambert and in

August last year he donated \$34 million to the University of Sydney for the “Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics”.

The *AFR* magazine cover depicts Katelyn on her grandfather’s lap Madonna-and-Child style.

I can provide a copy of the article, but the key bits are these. Katelyn was diagnosed in Nov2012 and her parents started treating her with imported cannabis medicine in Sept2014, after discovering it was an effective treatment from an internet search. In Nov2014 Katelyn’s father Michael attended a conference on medicinal cannabis in Tamworth, organised by the Haslam family. Mike Baird was a guest speaker. Two research pharmacologists from the University of Sydney were also in attendance, but they were the only academics, one of them commenting that the others stayed away because “they thought it was just for stupid hippies”.

The pharmacologists said they “had spent decades conducting cannabis research, [but] for all that time they could only get funding to study its dangers; no one had offered to fund the testing of its benefits”.

The happy ending to the story is that Michael met the pharmacologists at the conference, and subsequently prevailed on his father to fund their research: "My dad's loaded and I reckon I can get him to fund your research," Michael told them. And in another twist, the Sydney scientists were influential in convincing a cross-party Senate committee to unanimously support Greens legislation to legalise medicinal cannabis federally (which was not adopted by the Turnbull government: see submission).

This is not an argument that only conservatives can change their pet laws. A handful of lioness mothers publicly defied the mad cannabis laws on behalf of their children, the movement was widely publicised on FB, Empire Central USA relaxed a bit, and some Australian politicians finally got it, after decades of denial.

John Ransley
30 April 2016



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