

Medical Cannabis

Controlled Access Scheme

Information on Tasmania's Controlled Access Scheme for Medical Cannabis

The Tasmanian Government is developing a Controlled Access Scheme (CAS) to allow patients to access unregistered medical cannabis products under prescription from their treating medical specialist, in limited circumstances where conventional treatment has been unsuccessful.

How will medical cannabis products be prescribed?

The CAS will allow authorised medical specialists to prescribe medical cannabis products to their patients in certain circumstances. Patients wishing to access medical cannabis products should discuss access with their treating specialist.

The CAS will impose conditions to ensure patient safety, including review of applications by a skilled Panel of Specialist Medical Practitioners. Patients will be required to sign a consent form acknowledging and accepting the risks associated with using an unregistered product.

When will I be able to access medical cannabis products?

The CAS will facilitate allow access to medical cannabis products grown lawfully under Commonwealth licenses, when they come onto the market. This is expected to occur in 2017.

The CAS will also cover lawfully imported medical cannabis products. However, global supplies are relatively scarce and expensive, so importing isn't a viable option.

Announcement of the CAS is the first step towards allowing patient access. The Tasmanian Government will undertake further work to establish efficient administrative processes to support the scheme before it commences operation.

Where can I buy medical cannabis?

Once suitable products have been identified, patients with a prescription provided for under the CAS will be able to purchase products from their medical specialist or pharmacy.

Why can't my family doctor prescribe medical cannabis?

There are a number of risks associated with using unregistered drugs. However, the Tasmanian Government acknowledges that if conventional treatments been unsuccessful, patients may wish to use unregistered medical cannabis products.

General Practitioners will not be authorised to prescribe these products, as unregistered medical cannabis products will only be accessible to treat complex medical conditions where the patient would be under the care of a medical specialist. To ensure patient safety, it is essential that these products are only prescribed by medical specialists who are experts in their field and have the appropriate level of training.

How much would medical cannabis cost?

The Tasmanian Government is not responsible for regulating the cost of medicines.

As DHHS makes further progress to identify products to be supplied under the CAS, it will undertake work to understand the potential cost of unregistered medical cannabis products.

Why are these changes happening?

The Tasmanian Government has been considering this complex matter for some time. The CAS is a response to the increasing support within the Tasmanian community for access to unregistered medical cannabis products, and ensures that patient safety is protected.

A number of recent developments have contributed to this decision, including:

- the Australian Government's amendments to the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*, to introduce a national licensing scheme to oversee the controlled cultivation, production and manufacture of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes; and
- the Interim Decision of the Therapeutic Goods Administration's Scheduling Delegate to down-schedule medical cannabis products from Schedule 9 (Prohibited Substance) to Schedule 8 (Controlled Drug).

DHHS will undertake further work to establish an administrative process to support the CAS.

Is cannabis still illegal?

Yes. The CAS does not impact on the current status of cannabis as an illegal drug which causes significant harm in the community. All current Tasmanian offences relating to cannabis cultivation, possession and use will continue to be offences.

The only exception to this is medical cannabis products that have been prescribed and accessed under the CAS.

Can I grow cannabis?

Individuals cannot legally grow their own cannabis, even if they have a prescription.

The Australian Government's changes to the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* will introduce a national licensing scheme to oversee the controlled cultivation, production and manufacture of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes. Industry interested in cultivating, producing or manufacturing cannabis should contact the Australian Government Department of Health.