



**NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION**  
**AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**



---

# POSITION STATEMENT ON MEDICINAL CANNABIS

---

**Re-Endorsed by Annual Conference 2019**

**NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association**  
50 O'Dea Avenue Waterloo NSW 2017

P 02 8595 1234 (metro) • 1300 367 962 (regional)

**[www.nswnma.asn.au](http://www.nswnma.asn.au)**

# Position Statement on Medicinal Cannabis

Governments at both Commonwealth, State and Territory levels have implemented legislative and policy changes to allow the cultivation, manufacturing, prescribing and dispensing of medicinal cannabis products for patients in Australia<sup>1</sup>.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) administers the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (the Act), which establishes the regulatory framework for all medicines in Australia<sup>2</sup>.

Medicinal Cannabis as an 'unapproved therapeutic good'. The Act provides different mechanisms to allow access to unapproved therapeutic goods. For medicinal cannabis products these include:

- Authorised prescriber Scheme (AP)
- Special access scheme (SAS)
- Clinical trials<sup>2</sup>

The term 'medicinal cannabis' describes a range of cannabis preparations intended for therapeutic use such as oil, tinctures and other extracts, untreated cannabis, cannabis resin, and synthetic cannabinoids<sup>3</sup>.

There is limited evidence on the effectiveness of medicinal cannabis use in the treatment of medical conditions and little known about the most effective forms and dosage. Studies that have been undertaken have focused mainly on five areas: epilepsy; multiple sclerosis; chronic pain; chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting and palliative care<sup>4</sup>.

## THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION RECOGNISES THAT:

- The endocannabinoid system is a unique system found in the brain and body that affects many important functions.
- Medicinal cannabis plays an important role for many patients in alleviating symptoms, most notably with regard to epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, nausea and vomiting and palliative care<sup>4</sup>.
- The NSW Government recognises the potential for medicinal cannabis in specific patient groups and has established the *Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation* to

help improve our understanding of cannabis and cannabis products for therapeutic purposes, and support evidence-based innovation<sup>5</sup>.

- The NSW Parliament Legislative Council report *'The use of cannabis for medical purposes'*, (May 2013) Chair's foreword states "Our reading of the evidence – including rigorous scientific evidence – is that cannabis products are emerging as a promising area of medicine, most notably in respect of a number of painful conditions that do not respond to existing treatments".

## THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION ADOPTS THE POSITION THAT:

- Access to medicinal cannabis must be supported where patients, in consultation with their authorised prescriber, receive some therapeutic benefit from medicinal cannabis.
- Further research is required to examine the benefits and risks of medicinal cannabis use in managing health conditions and symptoms<sup>5</sup>.
- Approved medicinal cannabis products should be quickly and easily accessible for patients and made affordable.
- A legal framework must be established so that patients or their carers who are found in possession of medicinal cannabis prescribed by an authorised prescriber, have a complete legal defence from arrest or prosecution.

## REFERENCES

1. Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration, Guidance for the use of medicinal cannabis in Australia: Overview.  
<https://www.tga.gov.au/publication/guidance-use-medicinal-cannabis-australia-overview>
2. Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration, Access to medicinal cannabis products.  
<https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medicinal-cannabis-products-1>
3. Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration, Access to medicinal cannabis products: frequently asked questions (FAQs).  
<https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medicinal-cannabis-products-frequently-asked-questions-fags>
4. Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation, National evidence review.  
<https://www.medicinalcannabis.nsw.gov.au/health-professionals/prescribing-pathways>
5. Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation, The Centre.  
<https://www.medicinalcannabis.nsw.gov.au/about/cannabis-medicines-program>