

MEDIA RELEASE

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AMA welcomes consultation on unapproved medicinal cannabis

The Australian Medical Association has welcomed the start of the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) consultation into unapproved medicinal cannabis products.

Following AMA advocacy on the issue, head of the TGA Professor Tony Lawler announced the consultation at the AMA25 national conference earlier this month.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen thanked Professor Lawler and the TGA for acting and speaking about the rise in direct-to-consumer telehealth models, where the risks are potentially outweighing the benefits.

[The TGA's consultation](#) begins today, and Dr McMullen said the AMA was looking forward to contributing to this important discussion.

"We welcome the opportunity to raise key concerns about unapproved medicinal cannabis products, which are being prescribed at alarming rates through direct-to-consumer telehealth models," Dr McMullen said.

"Telehealth is an important mechanism to improve access to health services — but these direct-to-consumer, single-issue models lack clear referral pathways or a feedback loop to GPs and as the TGA has acknowledged, this requires much broader consideration by government."

The TGA has outlined these product-specific services as one of three key issues raised. Other key issues include whether there is appropriate regulatory oversight of unapproved medicinal cannabis products being accessed via the Special Access Scheme and Authorised Prescriber Scheme, and the safety risks of these products.

At the AMA25 conference, Professor Lawler said only two medicinal cannabis products were approved by the TGA, meaning most medicinal cannabis products are accessed through the unapproved goods scheme, which is not a regulatory control mechanism.

Dr McMullen said the evolution of Australia's healthcare system had outpaced current regulatory schemes, which were built around in-person consultations and community pharmacy dispensing.

"Clearly, the health landscape has changed dramatically in Australia, so it is vital we look at our regulatory settings and find out what needs to be done to address any gaps, including in the medicinal cannabis space," Dr McMullen said.

"We are seeing increasing reports of patient harm from cannabis, including psychosis, so this current surge in prescriptions is highly concerning. This is despite the reality there is very little evidence to support the use of medicinal cannabis other than in a small number of conditions.

"We look forward to working with the TGA and other bodies such as Ahpra to ensure our regulatory systems are fit for purpose."

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Last month, the AMA [welcomed Ahpra's updated guidance to address unsafe prescribing of medicinal cannabis](#). The updated guidance reminds practitioners to treat medicinal cannabis with the same caution as other drugs of dependence.

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