



Member Alert

Narcotic Drugs Amendment (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2021

The second reading of the *Narcotic Drugs Amendment (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2021* ('the Bill') was passed in the Senate without amendment on June 17 2021.

The Bill will introduce a single licence for the cultivation, production and manufacture of and research into medicinal cannabis. This aims to reduce the administrative burden on industry; however, it remains unclear whether these benefits will result in better processing times and reduced costs for patients.

The Bill amends the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* to:

- consolidate the medicinal cannabis licensing structure into a single licence framework;
- enable assessments relating to supply chains to be undertaken at the permit stage rather than the earlier licensing stage;
- allow licences to be granted for a period of up to five years; include a new simplified outline; and
- make minor and technical amendments.

The Bill implements a large number of the recommendations of the McMillan review on the operation of the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*, conducted by Professor John McMillan OA. The Final Report contains 26 recommendations to improve the regulatory framework for the cultivation, production and manufacture of medicinal cannabis in Australia. Minister Hunt accepted all 26 recommendations put forward by Professor McMillan, which broadly aim to reduce the regulatory burden on industry, promote and allow greater flexibility in the administration of the legislation to support industry innovation and development.

Labor supported the Bill, acknowledging that medicinal cannabis is very fast-developing therapeutic product internationally but, that there still remains much to be done in the emerging area of the therapeutic use of medicinal cannabis. Labor also noted the current lack of availability of affordable, safe, approved products as part of the existing legal framework is leading the vast bulk of Australians who use medicinal cannabis products to access them outside the legal framework.

The Bill was also supported by the Greens, who provided that these changes will improve the application times and reduce the regulatory burden on the applicants and licensees, which in theory, will reducing the burden on industry will result in lower-priced medicinal cannabis drugs.

Resources

- [Narcotic Drugs Amendment \(Medicinal Cannabis\) Bill 2021](#)
- [Review of the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967 - Final Report](#)