

Australia introduces medicinal cannabis legislation

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Australia Wednesday introduced legislation into parliament to legalise the growing of cannabis for medicinal purposes, with the government calling it "the missing piece in a patient's journey".

Health Minister Sussan Ley said the law, if passed, would allow cultivation of cannabis through a national licensing and permit scheme, opening the way to a safe, legal and sustainable supply of locally produced product for the first time.

"This is an important day for Australia and the many advocates who have fought long and hard to challenge the stigma around medicinal cannabis products," Ley said.

"For Australia, this is the missing piece in a patient's journey.

"Importantly, having a safe, legal and reliable source of products will ensure [medical practitioners](#) are now at the centre of the decision making

process on whether medicinal cannabis may be beneficial for their patient."

Research, including findings published last year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, showed marijuana has some effectiveness in helping treat [chronic pain](#).

But there are concerns about side effects and the issue of whether or not it works remains a matter of debate globally.

The Labor opposition and the Greens have indicated they support the move, with the government envisaging that cannabis will only be available to [patients](#) through a doctor's prescription or a medical trial.

"I sincerely hope the [parliament](#) can continue to work together to pass this legislation in a bipartisan fashion as quickly as possible in the interest of Australian patients seeking access to medicinal cannabis," said Ley.

Ley made clear though that the move did not mean legal recreational use of the drug was any closer.

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