



Your Ref : A923181  
Our Ref : ITS 72615  
Enquiries to :

Hon Dr Brian Walker MLC  
Chair  
Select Committee into Cannabis and Hemp  
Legislative Council Committee Office  
18-32 Parliament Place  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Dr Walker

### **Inquiry into Cannabis and Hemp**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the terms of reference for the Select Committee into Cannabis and Hemp.

WACHS values curiosity and equity in healthcare. We continually enquire and seek to understand, using the best evidence, insight and research to improve care and we are passionate about fairness in healthcare for all Western Australians, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people and communities.

WACHS encourages the consideration of all new therapeutics, and the available evidence supporting the use of these therapeutics, by the WA Drug Evaluation Panel (WADEP). As per the WA Health Statewide Medicines Formulary Policy, WACHS is guided by the decisions of this panel of experts and will endeavour to make medicines on the Statewide Medicines Formulary (SMF) available to patients in our care. The initiation of medicines in our organisation is predominantly restricted to medicines on the SMF as per this policy. Upon admission to our hospitals, WACHS permits patients to continue their use of medicinal cannabis products (MCP) if they are legally prescribed and supplied. There are currently no MCPs available on the SMF or provided by WACHS Pharmacy Services. Considering state subsidised medication outside of WA Health is currently outside of the scope of WADEP.

As the Committee will appreciate, the availability of a medication is much more complex than the legislated permission to prescribe, possess, supply or administer a medication. Despite being available via these mechanisms, the cost of therapy is often prohibitive and the role of the Commonwealth's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is pivotal in subsidising evidence-based medicine. In the absence of PBS subsidy, patients will be charged the entire cost of the product by their community pharmacy. There are currently no MCPs available on the PBS.

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WACHS recommends the Committee engage with the community pharmacy sector, which includes a network of over 180 pharmacies in regional WA, to address access and affordability concerns. WACHS will be guided by the Department of Health as to whether a statewide subsidy program that supports community pharmacies to provide affordable MCP should be pursued. To date there is no standardised approach to non-PBS medication access and affordability across WA.

Yours sincerely

Melissa Vernon  
**A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

12 January 2022