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Legislative changes to allow psychedelic-assisted therapy treatments for mental illness patients in the ACT if first approved by the TGA

Mind Medicine Australia has proposed conservative legislative changes to allow psychedelic-assisted therapy to be used for the treatment of mental illness in the ACT where they have first been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Mind Medicine Australia's Canberra chapter head, Tony Shields, said *"University research trials have found using psilocybin-assisted therapy to treat depression and MDMA-assisted therapy to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have produced results that are remarkably better than existing treatments. The TGA has individually approved medical practitioners and treatment-resistant patients for these treatments under its Special Access Scheme. However, whilst over 30 patients to date have received TGA approval, State and Territory legislation around Australia (except Victoria) doesn't allow this to take place. This includes the ACT. We have received legal advice from Greg Barns SC on the small changes to ACT legislation required for this treatment to take place."*

Although psilocybin and MDMA aren't yet registered medicines on the Therapeutic Goods Register, Mr Shields says the TGA does allow for their use on a case by case basis for treatment-resistant patients on compassionate grounds. This recognises the long-term suffering of these patients, their "all other options exhausted" nature and at times their serious risk of self-harm. Mr Shields says that *"arguing against allowing these patients to be treated in the ACT when approval has already been received from the TGA seems cruel and places you at odds with the TGA. It also puts you at odds with major overseas jurisdictions such as in the US, Canada, Switzerland and Israel which allow similar access for similar reasons."*

Mr Shields says allowing these treatments to occur in the ACT would put the ACT at the forefront of the emerging field of psychedelic assisted psychotherapy. However, the changes are still conservative said Mr Shields, *"Nothing would happen that hasn't already been approved by the TGA."*

MDMA and psilocybin assisted psychotherapy trials have shown results that are significantly better than existing treatments (both in terms of higher remission rates and much lower side effects). The treatments only require 2-3 sessions with the medicines as part of psychotherapy in medically controlled environments and have been shown to be safe and non-addictive when used in this way.

In the US, Iraqi and Afghanistan war veterans suffering PTSD have had very beneficial outcomes in trials using psychedelic assisted therapies. Mr Shields said US veteran groups have supported the treatments. *"Some of these groups are supporting their members to travel to Costa Rica for psychedelic assisted therapy treatments because of greater ease of access there. Obviously, these groups would like their members to be treated safely in the US itself."*

Mr Shields said Mind Medicine Australia had been in discussions with Legislative Assembly members about these changes. *"We are grateful for positive feedback from Minister Emma Davidson and government MLAs: Jonathan Davis; Dr Marisa Paterson; and Michael Pettersson. We have had no concerns raised from the Opposition MLAs, Peter Cain and Jeremy Hanson and had a good meeting"*



with Health Spokesperson, Guilia Jones last year." The Health Minister is now looking at the proposed legislative changes.

Mind Medicine Australia's purpose is to promote awareness and regulated access in Australia to these therapies through our medical system for the treatment of certain intractable mental illnesses to enable a far greater number of people to get well. The Board of Mind Medicine Australia includes ex-head of the armed forces, Admiral Chris Barrie AC, who is interested in the potential of MDMA assisted therapy to successfully treat war veterans and other people suffering from PTSD, retired federal minister, Andrew Robb AO, who has suffered from depression for decades and the Executive Director of the Ethics Centre and one of Australia's leading ethicists, Dr Simon Longstaff AO.

For more information please visit: www.mindmedicineaustralia.org

Please note the following are available for interview:

- Peter Hunt AM - Mind Medicine Australia Chair
- Tania de Jong AM - Mind Medicine Australia Executive Director
- The Hon. Andrew Robb AO - Board Director of MMA and former Trade Minister to Australia who has had treatment resistant depression for 43 years.
- Chris Barrie AC - Board Director of MMA and former Head of the Armed Forces who says these treatments are the only hope for Veterans suffering with PTSD
- Tony Shields - Mind Medicine Australia, Canberra Chapter Head
- Michael Raymond - Veteran in Canberra who has healed through these treatments

**For further information, or to arrange an interview, please contact Tony Shields – 0418676801, Ilan Hayman ilan@mindmedicineaustralia.org or Tania de Jong tania@mindmedicineaustralia.org
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