

Greens MP hopes Canberra will be the first to introduce psychedelic assisted therapy



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ACT Greens' Johnathan Davis. Picture: Sitthixay Ditthavong

ACT Greens' MLA Johnathan Davis wants Canberra to be the first jurisdiction to provide an accessible path for psychiatrists to prescribe psychedelic-assisted therapy to patients experiencing serious mental concerns.

At a Mind Medicine screening of Israeli documentary *Trip of Compassion* this week, Mr Davis told the audience he wanted the ACT to lead a nationwide push to get Psilocybin and MDMA rescheduled from a schedule-nine substance to a schedule-eight substance.

Psychedelic-therapy advocacy group Mind Medicine are driving a push for the change after the Department of Health handed down an interim decision last month not to reschedule the drugs.

Mr Davis said it was the policy of the ACT Greens that they should explore all options for the best recovery from anxiety, PTSD and depression.

"There is a mounting case of evidence being made that substances like MDMA can be used in a clinical environment to support people who are struggling with mental illness," he said.

Founding member of non-profit psychedelic-research group PRISM Stephen Bright said access to schedule-nine psychedelics was already available for research under a special access scheme.

Dr Bright said there had been problems with access in some jurisdictions once approval of the scheme was granted federally, however, the current scheduling was potentially protecting patients being treated by unqualified practitioners.

While Dr Bright was overseeing one of several controlled trials taking place in Australia this year, the Global Drug Survey revealed this week more people were turning to psychedelic drugs to self-treat mental illness.

Of the 110,000 respondents worldwide, 6500 people reported underground self-treatment with LSD, MDMA and Psilocybin. Only half reported preparatory or integrated support sessions alongside the treatment.

The head of the Australian arm of the survey, RMIT University's Dr Monica Barratt, said as Australia awaited the progress of clinical trials, demand for them could be filled outside the medical setting.

Dr Bright said people accessing these drugs in the underground from people who were not qualified to administer them were presenting at emergency departments at four times the rate of people who used them recreationally.

"I don't think giving mental health patients psychedelic drugs is a particularly smart thing to do unless you've got adequate training," he said.

"We need the appropriate training in place before we go down the path of rescheduling."

Labor backbencher [Michael Petterson was leading the push to have the possession of small amounts of heroin, ice and MDMA decriminalised in the ACT](#) and was responsible for the legalisation of cannabis possession. He said he was aware of the positive results doctors had been having using psychedelic-assisted therapy and wanted to support them in the best way possible.

Mr Petterson said while it was a priority right now he wasn't necessarily ruling out a push in the future.

"I don't think this is as controversial as some people would make it out to be, I think it's just a relatively new idea that we haven't turned our thoughts to yet," he said