Wednesday, 1 March, 2017

FAST-TRACKED MEDICINAL CANNABIS FOR KIDS WITH SEVERE EPILEPSY

Twenty-nine critically ill children have become the first in Victoria to legally access medicinal cannabis, with the Andrews Labor Government this week importing product from Canada ahead of local product becoming available in the middle of the year.

The Government is on track to deliver its first batch of local, safe medicinal cannabis to kids with epilepsy by the middle of the year through our medicinal cannabis access scheme, but we know that for families with the most severely ill children, every day without this life-changing medicine is one day too long.

That’s why we’ve taken action to fast-track access for these extremely sick kids – who due to the severity of their symptoms are unable to wait for the broader access scheme.

To enable this early compassionate access, a limited amount of cannabidiol oral solution manufactured by Canadian company Tilray – a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certified global leader in medical cannabis research and production – was purchased by the Government and arrived in Melbourne late last week.

Paediatric neurologists nominated children with the most severe symptoms of intractable epilepsy for the early access arrangements. A clinical panel then carefully considered which of those patients should be eligible against strict criteria set by the Independent Medical Advisory Committee on Medicinal Cannabis.

A total of 29 Victorian children who suffer from multiple daily seizures, who have endured many hospital admissions, and who are unable to participate in the normal day to day activities of a child, were identified by the clinical panel as suitable patients for the imported product.

Other children with severe intractable epilepsy will be eligible to access the locally grown and manufactured product when it becomes available in the coming months.

We’re getting on with developing local product with the first crop recently harvested and handed to the Office of Medicinal Cannabis to be formulated into a suitable medicine for children.

Last year, Victoria became the first jurisdiction in Australia to legalise access to medicinal cannabis.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“This is too important to wait. That’s why we’re doing everything we can to make sure those families in the greatest need can access this life-changing treatment for their kids as soon as possible.”

“This is the first time in Victoria kids with severe epilepsy will be able to legally access medicinal cannabis.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

“We know this medicine can dramatically change the quality of life for some of Victoria’s very sick kids.”

“This means families will no longer have to make the heart-breaking choice between breaking the law or watching their kids suffer.”

Media Contact: Georgia Brumby 0428 698 185 | georgia.brumby@minstaff.vic.gov.au