

**23 November 2020**

## **Medicinal cannabis champion to chair new Advisory Council**

Medicinal Cannabis Industry Australia (MCIA) is delighted to welcome Dr Richard Di Natale as the inaugural chair of the newly established Healthcare Practitioner/Patient Advisory Council.

“Richard has been a great champion of medicinal cannabis access for patients and will provide invaluable guidance as chair of this unique and important Advisory Council” said Peter Crock Chair of MCIA.

The group will play an important role in providing independent advice to and engaging with the Australian medicinal cannabis industry, medical experts, and patient advocates to raise awareness of the applications of medicinal cannabis.

“The Australian government made medicinal cannabis legal in 2016 and established a regulatory framework through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and Office of Drug Control (ODC) to ensure products for Australian patients are safe and effective,” said MCIA Chairman Peter Crock.

“This Group will be an important forum to ensure that patient access and the healthcare sector remain at the forefront of the medicinal cannabis industry and to facilitate access to this important new medicine that has potential to positively contribute to health outcomes for the community”.

Richard Di Natale will be joined on the Council by the following experts, with further members to be announced:

- Professor Jonathan Cebon, Group Head, Cancer Immunobiology Program, Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre (ONJCRI), and former Medical Director of ONJCRI
- Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, CEO, Australian College of Nursing
- Professor Iain McGregor, Academic Director of the Lambert Initiative, University of Sydney
- Associate Professor Vicki Kotsirilos, AM, General Practitioner and Honorary Academic, Adjunct Associate Professor, NICM School of Science and Health, Western Sydney University
- Carol Ireland, CEO and Managing Director, Epilepsy Action Australia

“This Council will ensure that there continues to be a strong focus on facilitating patient access to medicinal cannabis,” said Dr Di Natale, “I look forward to engaging with colleagues from the health, research and patient advocacy sectors to increase awareness of medicinal cannabis to Australians and to shape policy to support education and awareness of medicinal cannabis,” said Dr Di Natale.

“It is fantastic to see that we now have such broad support for medicinal cannabis in the community, however, there is still considerable work to be done to increase the number of prescribing doctors and make access for patients easier and more affordable,” said Mr Crock.

MCIA supports the establishment of the Advisory Council to:

- Facilitate improved patient access supported by evidence-based decision making and a community of appropriately trained physicians
- Create a forum for health care professionals and patient groups who have similar interests in medicinal cannabis to share ideas
- Provide a mechanism to provide HCP/patient insight and perspective to MCIA and other stakeholders

The Advisory Council looks forward to engaging widely with the healthcare and patient advocacy sector, and the broader patient community.

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**ABOUT MCIA:**

MCIA is the peak industry organisation for Australia's licensed medicinal cannabis industry. This encompasses all activities of medicinal cannabis licence holders across research, cultivation and manufacturing and interaction with patients, the medical profession and communities.

MCIA's focus is on building an industry that enhances wellbeing through facilitating access to quality Australian medicinal cannabis products for Australian and global patients.

MCIA is providing stewardship for an economically sustainable and socially responsible industry that is trusted and valued by patients, the medical community and governments. The Australian industry and its products are built on sound science and underpinned by industry processes and standards that ensure patients, the medical community and governments have confidence in the sector and its products.

More information is available at: [www.mcia.org.au](http://www.mcia.org.au)