

## Submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission

### MEDICINAL CANNABIS REFERENCE

<b>Number</b>	71
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Hi I am writing this email in regards to medical cannabis. I am concerned that what happens in Victoria has national implications. I am currently residing in Brisbane Qld, but feel what is happening in each State of Australia, affects us all. I have written and met with many Australian Politicians for the past 2 years, trying to change the laws and save my two sons. This is my story...

My name is Michelle Whitelaw. I am married and a mother to five children. I am currently unemployed, due to being a fulltime carer to both my youngest sons. Lachlan is 16 years old and Jai is 10 years old. Our family resides in Brisbane, Queensland.

When Lachlan was 13 months old, he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Later came additional diagnoses of Congenital Heart Disease, Autism and Depression. Back in 2014, Lachlan's feet became discoloured, swollen with built up fluid pockets which resulted in chronic pain. After exhausting all avenues of investigation (MRI, Xrays, Ultrasounds), multiple appointments with various specialists, (Orthopaedics', Cardiologists, Paediatrician, Endocrinologists, Dieticians, Physiotherapists), we were informed that no additional testing would be done. The specialists put his chronic pain and current feet condition, down to an unstable Haemoglobin 1AC reading, for the past 15 years.

As a mother, witnessing my sons quality of life deteriorate, it was beyond cruel and frustrating. He has fought for the past 15 years to live. Suffering countless Hypoglycaemic, Hyperglycaemic and Ketoacidosis events which are all life threatening. To date, Lachlan has endured, hundreds of hospital appointments, admissions, surgeries and tests, from the age of 13 months old. Now as a teenager, realising that his complex medical conditions are degenerative, the likelihood of him attempting suicide is high.

At present Lachlan's life is dependent on Insulin Pump Therapy (A Medtronic Insulin Pump). Having Type 1 Diabetes, means his chronic auto-immune condition, is constantly attacking itself. This also makes Lachlan susceptible and open to every possible disease. Having a diagnosis of Congenital Heart Disease, adds to the tremendous fear that even a possible cold or flu, could result in his life ending.

Back in mid-2014, Lachlan's appendices ruptured. During his admission at the hospital, he was given the medication known as Oxytocin. Every aspect of Lachlan's "being" changed, (Mentally, Physically, and Emotionally). He displayed signs of psychosis, nausea, aggression, hyperactivity, which played

havoc on his Blood Glucose Levels and resulted in a lengthy hospital stay. It was noted on Lachlan's medical chart, that he had an allergic reaction to this medication.

My eldest daughter (Emily) and my mother (Sylvia) also have endured reactions to all medications that end in, "dine". At this stage, it is believed that this allergy has been inherited. This makes finding a suitable pain relief near impossible.

My son Jai was diagnosed at the age of four with Autism. Later that year he was diagnosed with three Rare Epilepsy Syndromes. Landau Kleffner Syndrome (LKS), A rare epileptic encephalopathy known as, Continuous Spikes and Waves during Sleep Syndrome (CSWS - ESES) and Pseudo Lennox Syndrome. In just over five years, Jai has endured more than most during his life time. To date Jai has experienced over 50 hospital admissions, 30+ EEGs, VEEGs, AEEGs, ERGs, multiple dental reconstructive surgeries, failed multiple Anti-Epileptic Medications, endured many resuscitations and we have performed CPR on Jai many times.

Though some old studies on Jai's syndromes state that he may grow out his syndromes, there is not enough cases, nor any up to date information to be certain. What Jai has is unique and rare. We have been told he is "outside" the box for all his diagnoses. Jai's neurologist stated on National TV (back in 2013), that Jai is the most complex case she has dealt with within her career. At this time, it was noted, that Jai was having up to 500 seizures a day. Even if there is a possibility he could outgrow any of his syndromes, he first needs to get to adult hood. He suffers every type of seizure and multiple of them. Jai's last Pet Scan, revealed his brain has shrunk in size and has many black spot regions. This evidence, (besides EEG Reports and Findings) verifies the amount of seizure activity he has endured and the damage done to date.

In November 2014, Jai rapidly regressed overnight. This resulted in a visit to ED (Emergency Department) followed by being relocated to the Day Stay Ward and a hospital admission. Test confirmed Jai was in regression and we were discharged with no new options to treat the regression.

Having already failed many Anti-Epileptic Medications, after failing three medications, you are classed as having, Refractory Epilepsy. In Jai's case, no pharmaceutical medication will work and he is left on medications that have never reduced one seizure. The side effects he has encountered over the years from these medications are permanent and reduce his quality of life. He has cataracts, complete loss of night vision, no peripheral vision, brittle bones, low muscle tone, cognitive and physical impairment and the inability to be graded with an IQ (below low range).

The stress I have had endure for the past 15 years, has taken its toll on my own health, marriage and being. Knowing that neither of my sons, have any possibility of improving medically, leaves a very doomed future ahead. From the minute your child is diagnosed, with any incurable life threatening medical diagnosis, you grieve. You grieve for normality and you want their suffering to stop. The dark days, when you feel suffocated and consumed, you live minute

by minute. It's not living, it's functioning and that's what a lot of families, like mine, live it.

In December 2014, I decided to begin both my sons on Medical Cannabis Therapy as a last resort, in an attempt to improve quality of life. I am currently using Mullaways Medical Cannabis a low dose of THCa. What I have witnessed in the past three months has been miraculous.

In regards to Lachlan, the swelling fluid pockets on his feet, has completely vanished and coloration is back to normal. He is no longer suffering from Chronic Pain. For the first time in 15 years, Lachlan's Haemoglobin 1AC reading was within a good range. His quality of sleep has improved as has his energy levels. He is able to think clearly, studying well, socialise with confidence and is for the first time happy within himself. He is looking forward to completing VCE with determination. Lachlan has not experienced any negative side effects what so ever. He is on a low dose of 6mls, four times a day.

In regards to Jai, we have seen only three clinical seizures in over 5 months. That is a **reduction of 75,000 seizures** (basing it on, upto 500 daily seizures his neurologist stated he was having). His pupils are no longer fixed nor dilated. He is eating/drinking without choking, attending school, able to write, speech is improving, walk steady, kick a ball and ride his bike, socialise, dress and toilet himself. All of these are FIRSTS. His personality is bubbly and he is so incredibly alive and well. Jai has not experienced any negative side effects. He is currently on a daily total of 14mls daily total. I can confidently state, that Mullaways has given both my sons quality of life. No pharmaceutical medication has ever improved their health, only deteriorated it.

In regards to the current laws, there is a lot that needs to happen here in Queensland, Australia and countries around the world.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->First is amnesty, for the families, like mine, who have exhausted the medical system.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Second is the rescheduling of cannabis, for people who have a life threatening incurable medical diagnosis.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Third is amnesty for the medical specialists who wish to support cannabis therapy. At present the current laws recognise cannabis as a scheduled drug (poison). This currently puts medical specialists at risk of losing their degree. They are unable to chart, document or discuss cannabis therapy.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Forth is child protection. Currently the law states, that I am infact abusing both my children. I believe this is absurd and very harsh. Both my son's lives have improved and been saved. I believe if I did not take this step, either or both my sons, would be dead.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->· <!--[endif]-->Fifth is supply. Current laws make it illegal to cultivate. I do not wish to cultivate or be my sons pharmacist. Tony Bower (CEO of Mullaways) has put in several submissions over the years, here in Australia. I am aware that his medicine has been tested here in Qld and in NSW. Every single day, Tony, (like many others) is risking his freedom to save children like my sons. He does not ask for any money to be exchanged for his medicine. He is a compassionate grower and healer. No more a criminal than me.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->· <!--[endif]-->Sixth is testing. I would like to see regular testing done on products to ensure there is, no changes. I would like to see dispensaries opened and operated around Australia. There is plenty successful legal dispensaries around the world.

If the Qld Government does not adopt Victoria's laws, will my sons have the right to treatment in Victoria?

I am happy to provide any additional information, links, evidence, if needed, to support what I have stated. I am just a Mum who is saving her sons lives. I do not wish to be an outcast of society. The medical system had failed both my sons and as a duty of care (as a parent) I know I have no regrets in giving both my sons the chance to live.

Looking forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

Michelle Whitelaw.