



Our ref MC120796

Department of
Transport and Main Roads

29 July 2021

Mr David Heilpern
Director of Change
Drive Change
hello@drivechangemc.org.au

Dear Mr Heilpern

I refer to your email on the 18 July 2021 to the Honourable Mark Ryan MP, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services about a national medicinal cannabis law reform campaign. Your email was forwarded to the Honourable Mark Bailey MP, Minister for Transport and Main Roads for consideration and response. The Minister has asked that I respond on his behalf.

Drug use is a growing problem for road safety, yet a very complex and difficult one to solve. The *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* identified drug driving as a contributing factor in seven per cent of road fatalities within Australia. Further, the *National Road Safety Action Plan 2018-2020* indicates that road deaths from crashes involving a drug-impaired driver increased by 55 per cent between 2012 and 2016.

As you have outlined in your email, the use of medicinal cannabis is presenting challenges for those wanting to maintain a level of mobility through driving and breaking current laws designed to combat drug driving in Queensland. The role of drugs, in varying forms, is a growing problem for road safety, not only in Queensland but nationwide and internationally. While international jurisdictions vary in their approaches to managing this risk on the road, all Australian jurisdictions consistently take a zero-tolerance approach through presence based legislation as opposed to setting limits similar to alcohol.

We are taking this approach for medicinal cannabis as THC (Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is a psychoactive substance that has shown to impair cognitive and motor function, increasing the risk of being involved in a motor vehicle crash. Impairments that will affect a person's driving include their ability to anticipate hazards and unexpected situations, their decision making and their ability to respond quickly to changes in the traffic environment (e.g. reaction time). THC can also interact with other medications, impairing the metabolism of other drugs or causing cumulative effects such as sedation.

There are also differences on the impairing effects of THC based on length of use, quantity and an individual's own metabolism. It is for these reasons that it is very challenging to simply set a limit that can be easily tested at the roadside. Therefore, at this time the Queensland Government will continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to drug driving laws. However, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is acutely aware of the challenges faced by those wanting to use medicinal cannabis and continue driving. TMR is currently working very actively with other Australian jurisdictions through the National Drug Driving Working Group to look into this matter and investigate best practice models for roadside drug testing.

I trust this information is of assistance. If you require further information, I encourage you to contact Mrs Sussan Osmond, Principal Advisor (Safer Road Users), TMR, by email at sussan.j.osmond@tmr.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Mahon', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Mahon
General Manager (Land Transport Safety and Regulation)