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**Perth's mum's frustration: 'medicinal marijuana' legal in WA but inaccessible**

The debate about the status of medicinal marijuana in WA has taken another turn - with Health Minister Kim Hames writing to a frustrated Perth mum to say it can be prescribed but the substance itself is proving inaccessible.

Amalia's 10-year-old daughter suffers from a rare and severe form of epilepsy known as Dravet Syndrome and has been hospitalised since Saturday night after a seizure.



CBD was effectively legalised in WA from June 1 but is yet to be approved by the TGA. Photo: Supplied

She has tried 23 forms of traditional drugs without great success - and is currently on a combination of four - and Amalia was keen to trial the use of the compound cannabidiol (CBD).

She was delighted to receive a letter from Dr Hames saying that as of "June 1, 2015, CBD can be supplied, obtained and used, in the same way as any other prescription medicine."

recreationally abused. You may be interested to know that the Western Australian Department of Health assessed CBD and worked to have this substance nationally reclassified as a prescription medicine.

The good news is that, from 1 June 2015, CBD can be supplied, obtained and used in the same way as any other prescription medicine. This means that, if your daughter's doctors agree that this is a suitable therapy, then it could be legally prescribed. The status of cannabis itself has not altered.

In practice, however, there is no CBD product yet approved for sale in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Until a regulated product of suitable quality is approved, it will remain difficult for patients to access CBD. I am aware that there are products, such as Epidiolex®, already well into development and testing overseas. It may be some time before these are commercially available in Australia. As you are already aware, it is sometimes possible to gain access to these overseas products.

An extract from the letter from Health Minister Kim Hames to Perth mum Amalia.

But joy turned to frustration when she realised it was effectively unobtainable because no CBD product was yet approved for sale by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

"I was thrilled, I was jumping up and down and thinking 'here we go'," Amalia told Radio 6PR's Mornings program.

"I was very excited to see [Dr Hames] had said it is possible to prescribe but there are still many steps to access it. Unfortunately our doctor says he is unable to access it.

"There have been many reports on the internet about families in exactly the same situation and seeing fantastic results - a much better quality of life. We'd like to trial it."

WA Health Minister Kim Hames told Radio 6PR on Tuesday morning doctors could prescribe the oil to their patients if they could get access to it.

"We put in an application with New South Wales back in October to the TGA to get approval for the use of the oil, and that was approved and that's what is available from 2015," he said.

"But the trouble then is, you have to have a product you can buy so any doctor is able to use the product... it's the matter of getting access to it. And the TGA have yet to have a company come forward with a product that has been approved by the TGA. So we are in a catch 22 and nobody is able to use it.

"Now there is a drug I understand is being manufactured and is going through a process to get that approval but it hasn't been approved yet."

Dr Hames warned people not to give their sick kids unrefined cannabis.

"It is frustrating, but there are people out there with children that have tried to use cannabis in some form on their own and there is no evidence to suggest that its made a difference to their child's epilepsy," he said.

"There is some confusion.... people think lets just use some cannabis, but it's the chemical compound that is important," he said.

"The oil contains no THC, so that's the stuff that gives you a high - all of that drug component is taken out."

Labor spokesman for health, Roger Cook, said Dr Hames sending the letter to the family was "cruel".

"It has given false hope to patients around WA," he said.

"WA should be participating in the trials with New South Wales."

The status of medicinal marijuana in WA has been the source of considerable discussion over the past 18 months.

The state opposition has pushed for it and [Mr Hames has voiced his support for TGA-supported trial](#) - but WA has not joined NSW, Victoria and Queensland in embarking on an official trial.