

Australia green-lights medicinal cannabis exports

January 4 2018

Australia agreed to allow exports of medicinal cannabis Thursday in a boost to budding domestic manufacturers, as it eyes becoming a leading world supplier.

The country's first medical marijuana farm received its growers' licence in March last year and others have followed, with the government seeing a big future for the industry.

"This is actually a very important step for our domestic patients and our domestic supply," Health Minister Greg Hunt told broadcaster ABC.

"By knowing they have an Australian [market](#) and an international market, that improves the likelihood of growing and production in Australia."

He added that Australia was keen to become "the world's number one medicinal cannabis supplier", but that a condition of any export licence was that local patients were taken care of first.

"We want a robust Australian medicinal cannabis industry so that doctors have safe, quality domestic products that they can confidently prescribe to their [patients](#)," said Hunt.

While recreational use of cannabis remains illegal in Australia, federal laws were changed in 2016 to allow its use for medical purposes, in a broadly supported move.

Research, including findings published in 2015 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, showed marijuana has some effectiveness in helping treat chronic pain.

But there are concerns about side effects and the issue of whether or not it works remains a matter of debate globally.

Several other countries have legalised medicinal [marijuana](#), including Canada, Israel, and more than half the US states.

US-based Grand View Research estimated last year that the global market would reach US\$55.8 billion by 2025.

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Citation: Australia green-lights medicinal cannabis exports (2018, January 4) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-01-australia-green-lights-medicinal-cannabis-exports.html>

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