Cannabis Crisis Coalition

BRIEFING AND ADVICE NOTE · Minister of Social Development & the Central Drug Authority

TO	**Ms Dina Pule MP, Minister of Social Development**
ATTENTION	**Office of the Minister of Social Development. Ms Sandy Godlwana,** Head of Communication, the **Central Drug Authority**
FROM	Cannabis Crisis Coalition
DATE	17 November 2026

A public-health approach to cannabis: protect young people and fund prevention through regulation

Dear Minister Pule,

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Cannabis Crisis Coalition (CCC) has written an open letter to the President and seven Ministers, signed by 1,133 organisations and individuals, including patients, doctors, pharmacists, growers, manufacturers and businesses. We are sending it to your office in advance so that you are ready for media questions and can respond with a plan, not a holding line.

Regulation is a social protection tool. Today an unregulated market sells with no age checks, no labelling and no quality control. **Effective regulation is the best way to protect children and vulnerable communities,** and the Department of Social Development should help shape it.

The CCC has five priority asks of government, set out below. Your Ministry does not lead any of them, but several depend on its support.

We have asked the President to **convene a Presidential Round Table bringing the CCC together with all seven responsible Ministers and SAHPRA** to deliver the five priorities on one time-bound plan. We ask you to support that request and to attend in person.

The situation

- **An unprotected market.** Cannabis outlets proliferate under questionable compliance claims, with no enforceable age limits or product standards.
- **Criminalisation harms families.** Arrests for private use leave criminal records that block employment, falling hardest on young and poor South Africans.

- **Reform is coming either way.** The CfPPA and a DTIC commercial framework are in preparation; the social sector's voice is needed now.

The CCC's five priorities

All five priorities need political leadership to happen on time. The ones your Ministry leads are highlighted.

1	**Lift the ban on Section 21** Instruct the Department of Health and SAHPRA to lift the ban on Section 21 approvals that is blocking doctors from treating patients with serious medical conditions. Patients are already running out of medicines. LEAD Health and SAHPRA TIMEFRAME Immediately
2	**Finalise the Cannabis for Private Purposes Act** Urgently finalise the regulations so that the Act can come into force. LEAD Justice and Constitutional Development TIMEFRAME Final Date Committed by 11 December 2026; in force by the end of February 2027.
3	**Remove cannabis from the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act** Take cannabis out of the Act, so that it is governed by its own laws for private use, medicine and commerce. LEAD Justice and Constitutional Development TIMEFRAME Date committed by 11 December 2026; in force by end of first quarter of 2027
4	**Establish a register for South African medicinal cannabis** Instruct SAHPRA to establish a register for quality-assured medicinal cannabis that is GMP-manufactured in South Africa, so that Section 21 is no longer the only route for patients. LEAD Health and SAHPRA TIMEFRAME Approach agreed at the Round Table; draft for comment by mid-2027
5	**End cannabis arrests** Issue a national SAPS directive placing a moratorium on arrests for the private use, possession and cultivation of cannabis, in line with the 2018 Constitutional Court judgment, until the Cannabis for Private Purposes Act is in force. LEAD Police, with Justice and the NPA TIMEFRAME Directive issued before the December shutdown

What we are asking your Ministry to do

1. **Support a Presidency-convened Round Table and attend in person,** bringing the Central Drug Authority and proposals for public-health and youth protections.

   TIMEFRAME **Advisers and officials meet before the December shutdown; ministerial Round Table before the State of the Nation Address in February 2027**

2. **Align the work of the Central Drug Authority and the National Drug Master Plan** with the CfPPA and an evidence-based public-health and harm-reduction approach.

   TIMEFRAME **First quarter of 2027**

3. **Advocate in Cabinet for strong youth protections** within the commercial framework: age limits, labelling, advertising restrictions and responsible retail.

   TIMEFRAME **As the commercial framework is drafted during 2027**

4. **Support earmarking a share of future cannabis revenue** for prevention, treatment and community programmes.

   TIMEFRAME **Position agreed at the Round Table, February 2027**

What is at stake for South Africa

The National Cannabis Master Plan values the sector at around **R28 billion**, with **10,000 to 25,000 jobs** across the value chain. Today the formal market generates only about R5.5 billion a year; roughly half of all activity is illicit and pays no tax. Revenue from a regulated market can fund prevention and treatment, and new jobs for young people in rural areas reduce vulnerability.

Considerations for your office

- **Protector of children and families.** DSD can own the public-health safeguards in a reform that is already under way.
- **Evidence-led.** International experience shows regulation with youth protections outperforms an unregulated grey market.

Next step

We ask for a meeting with you or senior officials and a written response within 14 working days of publication of the open letter, confirming your support for the Round Table and setting out your department's timetable. The CCC can brief your advisers this week.

Yours sincerely,

The Cannabis Crisis Coalition

On behalf of the 1,133 organisations and individuals who signed the open letter to the President