



Industrial Hemp Association of Victoria

Representing producers, financiers, processors, importers, wholesalers, retailers and end users of industrial hemp products

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The Hon. David Davis, MLC
Minister for Health
GPO Box 4057
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

The Hon. Peter Walsh, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security
Minister for Water
Level 20, 1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

The Hon. Richard Dalla-Riva, MLC
Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade
Level 36, 121 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ministers,

RE: NEW INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES & FOOD LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS

Jeff Kennett introduced legislation in 1998 allowing industrial hemp to be grown as a crop in Victoria, under licence. Victoria was the first State to legislate and other States followed – the most recent being NSW in 2008. The draft legislation was reviewed and supported by a committee comprising representative/s from the Farmers Federation, the police, the Department of Primary Industries and various other interested bodies. Since that time, the industry has not progressed at all.

In the same year, an application was made to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) for acceptance of industrial hemp as a food. FSANZ recommended hemp, without reservation, to be accepted as a food. The Ministerial Council rejected it without technical or scientific substantiation of their reasons. They said, “Ministers decided to retain the total prohibition on the use of industrial hemp as a novel food because they believe that the use of hemp in food may send a confused message to consumers about the acceptability and safety of the high THC cannabis.” This should now have minimal bearing, if any, because licenses are available for growers of industrial hemp in all States. In addition, consumers are proving to be increasingly aware of the differences between industrial hemp and marijuana and increasingly demanding of healthy diet ingredients.

We are seeking your consideration to supporting the acceptance of industrial hemp as a food and developing the industry in Victoria. The following is a brief summary on the current status:

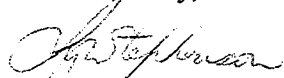
- Unlike its marijuana cousin, industrial hemp has minimal, if any, levels of THC (the psychoactive ingredient in *Cannabis Sativa* which makes marijuana what it is). However they unfortunately share the same botanical name. (By way of comparison, consider poppy seeds and opium).
- A further food application to FSANZ is now being assessed, requiring an additional 850 hours work. The resultant FSANZ recommendations are unlikely to vary from their previous recommendations nor reveal any negative impact. However, there is the risk of again being rejected by the Ministerial Council.
- Industrial hemp is available as a food in every other industrialised nation.
- Australian States already have legislation (and a policing/enforcement structure) in place for growing industrial hemp.
- Those who are licensed to grow industrial hemp in all Australian jurisdictions have the responsibility to ensure low THC content. The level of THC does not increase as the plant matures.
- There are enforcement structures in place for other "sensitive" crops in Australia (e.g. poppies in Tasmania and the former tobacco industry).
- Industrial hemp is sustainable and can contribute to regional development.
- Industrial hemp:
 - from sowing to harvesting takes 110-120 days;
 - can produce a much greater fibre yield and financial yield per hectare than forestry;
 - has many more carbon sequestration options than timber products;
 - is a proven heavy metal and contaminated soils cleanser when used as a "mop crop";
 - requires minimal, if any, pesticide inputs when managed correctly;
 - can be grown on a broad range of soils with minimal but strategic water applications and has some drought resisting properties;
 - has many advantageous properties when grown in rotation within intensive cropping systems;
 - has a product range as diverse as textiles, cosmetics, animal bedding, food and building materials;
 - unlike flaxseed, has optimal balance of omegas and essential fatty acids for human body uptake.

The industry has not progressed in Australia for two main reasons:

1. Costly new infrastructure or alteration to existing infrastructure such as pulp mills, textile processing plants, and specialist harvesting equipment.
2. Processing for food is the most cost effective way to profit from this crop. Hemp seed oil and hemp protein powders are readily available in supermarkets in North America. Canada has a multi-million dollar industry, selling primarily to the United States (where it cannot be grown but can be eaten). Like the United States, Australia currently prohibits the use of hemp for human consumption. New Zealand permits hemp seed oil for human consumption.

I could expound the virtues of this remarkable crop for volumes and would be happy to provide you with more research or information if you so require. I would appreciate you considering this matter so that we can see some progress with a new industry in Victoria – we still have the opportunity to lead the country in this industry, even after 12 years of inactivity. After your review of this matter, your reply would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Lyn Stephenson,
President