

14 August 2014

Our Ref: KS/FM
File No.: 0226

Mr Tom Wise
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

**Legislative Council Government Administration Committee Inquiry
into the use of natural botanical medicinal cannabis flower
and extracted cannabinoids for medical purposes.**

The Local Government Association of Tasmania thanks the Committee for the invitation to make a submission.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) is the representative body of Local Government in Tasmania. Established in 1911, the LGAT is incorporated under the Local Government Act 1993. The objectives of the Association include promoting efficient administration and operation of Local Government in the State of Tasmania; fostering and promote relationships between Local, State and Commonwealth Governments and representing the interests of the members of the Association generally, and in such particular matters as may be referred to the Association by its members.

Our submission relates only to Inquiry Terms of Reference 5 and 6.

A significant proportion of LGAT's Member Councils feel strongly that there should be the opportunity to cultivate, produce and supply medicinal cannabis and that this consideration should be separate from consideration of the use of medicinal cannabis in Tasmania.

Industrial hemp, medicinal cannabis and other bio-pharmaceutical production and processing are emerging industries with the potential to drive economic growth within the State and across a number of regions experiencing economic downturn following the reduction in forestry and mining industries.

The Local Government sector does not perceive the growing of medicinal cannabis as a threat to current agricultural practices, but rather a value adding crop. It is felt that within the Tasmanian context, there is a proven track record for medicinal crops, such as poppies.

There is also a need to provide legislative flexibility to trial such emerging sectors sooner rather than later. For example, Huon Valley Council have reported that at least 2 Tasmanian companies are ready, willing and able to invest to build in a world class extraction and processing facility with the capability to process medicinal cannabis to full pharmaceutical grade medicine.

The Local Government Sector seeks the support of the Legislative Council in fostering an approach which, rather than being immediately prohibitive, addresses how this industry can be established safely, with the appropriate regulatory scrutiny, in Tasmania.

Tasmania is at a point where enterprise and new initiatives are going to be imperative for future growth. This is an emotive issue that likely has drawn the same concerns as when the establishment of the poppy industry occurred. What needs to be considered in this situation is the economic benefit from broadening the agricultural base in this state, the regulatory safeguards that need to be put into effect to ensure public safety and a sensible debate about what is actually being grown.

The emotive aspects of drug addiction and the marijuana use need to be divorced from the evidence associated with the product that might be grown in Tasmania and the medicinal properties associated with its use. There are several other jurisdictions across the world where medicinal cannabis is grown and harvested under strict regulatory regimes.

It is considered that these arrangements need to be thoroughly and carefully assessed with the prospect of ensuring that a safe and sensible approach to growing such crops in Tasmania might be possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allan Garcia', with a stylized flourish below the name.

Allan Garcia
Chief Executive Officer