

15 August 2014

Mr Tom Wise
Secretary
Government Administration Committee A
Inquiry into Legalised Medicinal Cannabis
Parliament of Tasmania
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Mr Wise

Inquiry into Legalised Medicinal Cannabis

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into the Government Administration Committee A's Inquiry into Legalised Medicinal Cannabis.

Think South (formally the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority (STCA)) is the peak body representing the 12 southern councils, together these councils make up over 50 per cent of the Tasmanian population.

In the past few years the Tasmanian economy has experienced a significant slowdown as the impacts of the global financial crisis have stretched around the world. In particular, those communities that have traditionally had a strong forest industry are feeling effects more severely through a loss of employment and a decrease of economic activity within these towns.

To combat the downturn in the forest industry, these local communities have sought other economic development opportunities, to create jobs and deliver economic growth.

In Southern Tasmania the Huon Valley Council and the Derwent Valley Council have both provided support for a trial of growing medicinal cannabis and an expansion of the industrial hemp industry.

Together these two councils have brought the issue to Think South and at our recent Board meeting unanimous support was provided for a trial of growing medicinal cannabis in Southern Tasmania as well as an expansion of the industrial hemp industry.

This is a significant development, because for the first time across Tasmania a number of urban councils have recognised the economic benefits to the region of a medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp industry.

Think South has also noted that throughout the recent media coverage there seems to have been significant confusion between medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp. It is important to distinguish that these are to entirely different crops, with different commercial uses.

However, Think South believes that both crops have the potential to be significant economic drivers for the southern Tasmanian region. In particular through opportunities presented by the downstream processing of each plant.

With the reduction of regulation an expanded industrial hemp industry could be developed quite quickly within Tasmania. Industrial hemp possesses downstream processing opportunities through the development of hemp oil for use in food products as well as hemp fibre products for use in clothing and other industrial products.

Through the local councils we understand that there are a number of interested parties, who would be willing to invest in a trial of growing medicinal cannabis. Unfortunately, this opportunity was lost due to the unwillingness of the State Government to make the appropriate legislative changes, although we understand that the proposed growing trial of medicinal cannabis on Norfolk Island may no longer be taking place.

This means the opportunity for Tasmania to be a leader in this new industry is well and truly back on the table. We are urging leadership from the Tasmanian Government to ensure that this trial is able to take place. We believe that there is strong community support for a trial and have no reason to think that any community concerns couldn't be alleviated through careful planning.

Tasmania has had great success in growing poppies for the pharmaceutical industry, with this proven track record of growing such a product. We believe Tasmania is the perfect location for a trial of growing medicinal cannabis and would welcome the economic benefits associated with any trial and expanded industry.

Think South, including Mayoral representatives from local government would welcome the opportunity to appear in front of the Committee to provide further information as witnesses to the inquiry.

If you require anything further then please don't hesitate to contact myself on 0439 816 238 or at bwest@stca.tas.gov.au.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. West', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Brenton West
Chief Executive Officer
Think South