



DERWENT VALLEY COUNCIL

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File:

Mr Craig Farrell, MLC for Derwent
Chair
Legislative Council Sessional Committee
Government Administration A
Parliament House
HOBART TASMANIA 7000

Dear Mr Farrell and Members of the Committee,

**Legislative Council government administration committee A
Enquiry into Legalised Medicinal Cannabis**

On behalf of the Derwent Valley Council I would like to thank the Legislative Council for the opportunity to make a submission on the above matter.

Derwent Valley Council has instigated a working group to provide a policy position and inform Council on the current debate regarding the legalisation of cannabis for medicinal purposes and the use of hemp for food, cosmetic and industrial purposes.

The working group therefore makes the following submission on behalf of Council to the inquiry.

The working group is not able to comment with any authority on points 1 – 3 and 5 of the Inquiry Terms of Reference. However, the working group feels that it can provide input into the enquiry on points 4 and 6.

Point 4: The growing of cannabis for medicinal purposes is currently prohibited in Tasmania; however recent media and anecdotal reports have given a number of examples where cannabinoids may be of use in the treatment of certain conditions. In order to provide an evidence base for these claims, the working group feels that further research is appropriate, and that Tasmania is ideally placed to lead this research due to its experience in growing poppies and the natural borders created by its island status.

Tasmania currently grows approximately 40% of the world's legal opium production, with very few incidents of unlawful access to poppies in paddocks; this gives the State an automatic advantage in areas of quality control as there is an existing protocol and evidence base that the State is able to sustain this type of production.

Tasmanian scientists are globally recognised for the innovative research they undertake across a wide range of fields, the addition of research and a science based approach into the efficacy or otherwise of cannabinoid based medication would only add to the prestige of the State's scientific research.

Again, taking the lessons we have learnt from poppy growing into account, the State is ideally placed to develop a quality control system that provides consistency and reliability in the production of cannabis for medicinal purposes. As a State, we already have the knowledge base, it is a matter of adapting that into a research environment for a new crop, being cannabis for medicinal purposes.

Point 6: This inquiry focuses on the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes, however, the broader issue of the use of the plant *Cannabis sativa* for industrial, food and cosmetic use is also under discussion and bears mention as it relates to the regulation of the growing of cannabis for medicinal purposes in Tasmania.

Tasmania has for approximately the last 42 years allowed the growing of cannabis (referred to as hemp to avoid confusion with other forms of the plant) for industrial purposes on a trial basis and under strict regulation. There are currently 11 regulations around the growing of poppies (a narcotic crop) in Tasmania and 21 regulations governing the growing of hemp for industrial, cosmetic or food purposes in Tasmania, this is despite stringent testing to ensure that hemp does not contain more than trace levels of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive component of the plant.

In considering the implications of growing cannabis for medicinal purposes, it is important not to isolate this from the discussion around allowing hemp to be grown for industrial, food and cosmetic purposes. There is a great deal of world wide research regarding the uses for and benefits of hemp, evidence shows that this multi purpose crop can successfully be produced and processed to great economic benefit.

Therefore a three phased approach to the testing of cannabis for medicinal cannabis may not only benefit that industry but also the industrial hemp industry.

Phase one of this approach would include the lessening of regulations around the growing of hemp for industrial, food and cosmetic purposes, therefore allowing farmers to investigate the possibility of growing this crop in commercially viable quantities and attracting processors of hemp to Tasmania. This would not only boost the economy of the State through a number of potential value added markets, but would give farmers an additional and possibly lucrative option in crop rotation practices that would work with rotations of potatoes and poppies.

Phase two could include lobbying to change the current situation that prevents hemp products being used as food products in Australia further broadening the economic benefits of hemp cropping.

Running alongside phases one and two is the final phase, an opportunity to further investigate the potential of cannabis for its medicinal qualities. This may also include the investigation of non-THC producing variants of the species for their possible medicinal qualities.

Rather than looking at the production of medicinal cannabis in isolation, there is a case to look at the production of both hemp and medicinal cannabis to benefit the economy of Tasmania and in particular the regional areas of Tasmania that have been hard hit in recent years by industry change and the down turn in prices for vegetable growers etc.

In closing, the Derwent Valley Council's working group would strongly and respectfully urge the members of the inquiry to look at the broad possibilities regarding the cultivation of the cannabis plant for all its possible purposes. The House of Assembly Standing Committee on Environment Resources and Development, in its inquiry in 2012/2013 into the Tasmanian Industrial Hemp Industry found (in part) that the regulations around growing hemp in Tasmania was an impediment to the development of a lucrative industry in the State. If that report's recommendations were to be looked at in conjunction with the recommendation that a stringent set of regulations be developed to govern a trial of medicinal hemp in the State to look at a scientific approach to establishing the veracity of claims surrounding medicinal cannabis there is the possibility that Tasmania may be able to establish a new industry in the processing of these products and reap the economic rewards of such an industry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a flourish.

Martyn Evans
Mayor