



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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### **DRUGS MISUSE AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (4.43 p.m.): The Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 2002 is a very important initiative that will pave the way for the expansion of the industrial hemp industry in Queensland, again showing that the Beattie Labor government represents all Queenslanders. The regulation of a commercial industry for industrial hemp will create jobs and enable Queensland growers and manufacturers to ride a possible wave of world demand for hemp products. I will touch on some possible ways rural producers may benefit into the future.

I am aware that there are at least two possible income streams from hemp fibre. The first is the sale of raw stalk and the second is the sale of processed fibre. Raw stalk can be used for garden products, plastic production, paper pulp and in the building industry. Raw stalk can also be onsold for further processing for higher valued end uses. Processed bast fibre has fundamentally two different markets—the non-woven/geo-textile market, including fibre plastics, and the general textile market, including lint for paper pulp.

The hemp seed's superior nutritional qualities give rise to a wide range of foods. Income may also be generated by an extensive range of products and processing technologies to established world markets. Hemp seed is the nut of the industrial hemp plant. The seed is high in many nutrients and contains no psychoactive effect which is associated with the drug plant. Some of the nutritional benefits of hemp seed may outweigh those of soya and flax, hemp seed's nearest alternatives. Hemp seed allegedly contains a perfect balance of omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids and GLA. These EFAs cannot be produced by the body but are essential to good health. Hemp contains 24 per cent to 34 per cent superior protein and high-quality dietary fibres.

There are another two types of hemp based plastics—hemp fibre plastic composites and hemp stone. Hemp fibre plastic production is based on hemp fibres being mixed with a small quantity of polypropylene. Importantly, hemp fibre plastic is equally capable of using recycled plastic and as a finished product is itself recyclable. This material can be injection moulded to produce a wide variety of traditional plastic products. Hemp stone is a new manufacturing process which produces plastic-like products from 100 per cent hemp material. No polypropylene is utilised in this process and it can be fully biodegradable. I thank Ecofibre Industries Ltd for supplying me with some of that information. It distributes *Hemp Files*, which is a regular update to people closely involved with the company.

It is interesting to note that hemp is a regionally based industry requiring over 2,000 hectares of suitable overhead irrigated broadacre land available annually for cropping over 100 days, normally from October to January, within 60 kilometres of a local fibre processing mill. Often the mill will require between \$5 million and \$9 million to establish. It needs to be well supported by local infrastructure, including access to sites, rail, port, et cetera. That is good news in terms of job creation throughout Queensland.

As we know, for the last four years Queensland has been conducting trials and it is now ready to take full commercial advantage of a booming world market. Accordingly, this bill amends the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to enable the full commercial production of cannabis fibre and seed, research into the use of cannabis as a commercial fibre and seed crop, and plant breeding programs for developing new

or improved strains of cannabis. These amendments are a natural extension of the existing sections of the act, which was set up to allow a trial of the industry. The act was amended to include a new part 5B. This provided an exemption to allow the trial planting of cannabis sativa for commercial fibre production under strictly controlled terms and conditions. Trial plantings were allowed for an initial period of three years. This period was extended for one year until 18 December 2002.

This legislation clearly differentiates between the illicit drug market and the development of a legal industry to exploit the international demand for hemp fibre and seed products. Industrial cannabis is considered to be industrial when the THC drug content is under three per cent. Marijuana—cannabis sativa—used for illicit purposes or known as a recreational drug can have a THC level from three per cent to 24 per cent.

This bill contains a strict regulatory system to ensure a clear distinction between legal and illegal activities. At its core is a stringent licence regime. I commend the minister and his department for the good, hard work that has been done. I commend the bill to the House.