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Submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Potential of the Hemp Industry in Australia

The Australian hemp industry presents one of the most compelling opportunities for sustainable growth, regional development, and export expansion in the coming decade. Through my Churchill Fellowship research across seven countries, I witnessed firsthand how hemp can revitalise farming communities, displace unsustainable industries, and deliver health and wellness benefits at scale. Australia has the conditions to match or exceed these outcomes, but regulatory and market barriers are holding us back.

Opportunities

Hemp is uniquely positioned as a rotational crop that improves soil health, sequesters carbon, and diversifies farmer income. For regions transitioning away from logging or traditional monocultures, hemp offers a high-value, low-impact alternative that aligns with sustainability goals. At the manufacturing level, hemp supports value-added industries across food, fibre, and oil, enabling regional processing jobs and new export pathways. Australian hempseed foods are rich in digestible protein, omega oils, and fibre, with clear applications in preventative health, wellness, and longevity nutrition.

The global market for hempseed foods is expanding rapidly, and Australia is well placed to supply premium product into Asia, North America, and Europe. With the right policy settings, hemp could deliver thousands of jobs, greater returns for farmers, and position Australia as a leader in sustainable plant-based nutrition.

If hemp replaced just 10% of global soy production, it would sequester 4.8 gigatonnes of carbon over 20 years. Equivalent to the annual emissions of approx. 1 Billion cars.

Barriers

Despite these opportunities, progress is constrained by outdated perceptions and regulatory settings. Major digital advertising platforms such as Meta and Google continue to block or heavily restrict hemp food advertising in Australia, even for non-therapeutic products. This prevents Australian businesses from reaching domestic consumers and building export channels, while in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, these same platforms allow hemp food promotion without issue. This discrepancy directly undermines our international competitiveness and requires parliamentary intervention to ensure fair treatment for Australian producers.

In addition, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has restricted the use of hempseed meal in animal feed. This restriction is inconsistent with global practice and blocks a significant domestic market opportunity for hemp byproducts that could displace imported soymeal, reduce feed costs, and improve livestock nutrition.

Conclusion

Hemp is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to diversify Australian agriculture, replace unsustainable industries, and contribute to national health and climate goals. To unlock its potential, Parliament must act to remove advertising restrictions, modernise feed regulations, and support investment in processing and export development. Without these changes, Australia risks being left behind while global competitors capture the value of this transformative crop.

Regards,

Tim Crow
Managing Director