

SELECT COMMITTEE INTO CANNABIS AND HEMP

Final Report — Medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp in Western Australia — Tabling

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [10.19 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the final report of the Select Committee into Cannabis and Hemp titled *Medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp in Western Australia*.

[See paper [2147](#).]

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: The report that I have just tabled advises the house of the current barriers to the use, prescription, availability and affordability of medicinal cannabis products and makes recommendations to address these barriers. It also looks at the potential benefits and risks of human consumption of industrial hemp.

Medicinal cannabis has been lawful in Australia since 2016. It is a pharmaceutical-grade medicine available only via a prescription from a medical professional and dispensed from a pharmacy. Patients use medicinal cannabis to alleviate the symptoms of health conditions, including, but not limited to, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, nausea and vomiting, sleep disorders and palliative care.

The committee identified barriers to prescribing and accessing medicinal cannabis for healthcare professionals and patients. The first barrier is regulatory and administrative, such as the need for medical practitioners to obtain approval from the Department of Health before prescribing a schedule 8 medicinal cannabis product and the department's daily prescribing limit of 40 milligrams a day. The second barrier is GP reluctance to prescribe due to a lack of confidence in their knowledge of the subject and its regulatory process. The third barrier is the cost to patients. The fourth barrier is Western Australia's driving laws. It is unlawful for anybody to drive with any THC in their system regardless of whether it is legally prescribed and whether the person is actually impaired. The mere presence of THC in a person's bodily fluid has no correlation to their current level of impairment. The fifth barrier is zero tolerance workplace drug testing, with some workplaces treating medicinal cannabis differently from other potentially impairing prescription medications.

The committee has recommended various regulatory and legislative changes to overcome these barriers. Industrial hemp contains no more than one per cent THC. It does not produce any psychoactive effect. It is cultivated for use in products, such as fabrics and textiles, building materials, personal care products and food supplements. The consumption of hemp seed foods has been legal in Australia since 2017. There are applications before Food Standards Australia New Zealand to allow the sale of hemp leaf, seed sprout and root as food and food ingredients. Industrial hemp farmers face issues such as the inability to extract CBD from the leaves and flowers of industrial hemp plants without a licence from the Office of Drug Control and lack of export opportunities.

We thank all those who contributed to this inquiry by making submissions and appearing before the committee and those we met with during our domestic and international travel. On behalf of the committee, I acknowledge the excellent work of dedicated staff and thank them for all their assistance. I commend the report to the house.