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## **HEMP VOICES TO BE HEARD AT SENATE HEARING**

The Industrial Hemp industry has so much to offer in so many diverse areas as an emerging agricultural crop. This multipurpose plant can improve our soils, provide stock feed, energy efficient homes, replace large swathes of plastic used in horticulture, provide protein rich food, textiles, skin care while also reducing Australia's carbon budget, contribute to our circular economy and improve our regional economies. Hemp would also present a practical transition opportunity for regional communities navigating the decline of native logging and seeking new sustainable industries.

The state industrial hemp association, iHemp NSW, will have a seat at the table when the Senate Standing Committee holds its final public hearing into opportunities available in the Australian hemp industry in Canberra on 15 May.

The National Farmers Federation President, Michael Guerin has written to support iHemp NSW's submission to the inquiry, *Opportunities for the development of a hemp industry in Australia*, saying **industrial hemp's significant contribution to food, fibre, fodder, extracts, carbon and construction components to our economy and community will also enhance our environmental, social and commercial standing globally.**

### **The NSW case**

Hemp's broad agricultural, environmental and regional economic potential is being hampered by policy settings and the lack of a National Advisory Group (similar to the NSW Taskforce) to assist government and bureaucracy in navigating these barriers.

iHemp NSW has called for six key reforms in its submission:

1. A legislated federal definition of industrial hemp as cannabis containing less than 1% THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol is the primary psychoactive compound in cannabis). No 'high' here!
2. Removal of industrial hemp from the National Poisons Schedule, with oversight transferred to DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)
3. National harmonisation of licensing, transport and compliance systems

4. Targeted investment in processing and manufacturing infrastructure capable of meeting export market specifications
5. National education campaigns to improve understanding of industrial hemp's legality, applications and role in the regenerative and circular economy.
6. Recognition of hemp's carbon sequestration and low-emission benefits within national carbon accounting frameworks

NSW has 244 registered hemp growers and 19,306Ha under licence, yet only 1,087Ha were planted in 2024/25. Industry representatives say the gap highlights both the opportunity and the barriers facing the sector.

Growers are ready, but processing infrastructure remains the missing link.

Bulk fibre processing is essential for the woody inner core of the stalk (the hurd) to be available on a suitable scale. The hurd supports industries such as hempcrete, low-carbon building materials, and wood-substitute manufacturing. The other significant part of the stem, the bast, is suitable for insulation, horticultural weed matting, animal bedding, packaging, its excellent absorption properties, and bioplastics.

China has expressed a strong interest in Australian hemp fibre, particularly high-quality textile-grade fibre. However, unlocking this export opportunity requires targeted investment in decortication, fibre refinement and regional processing infrastructure capable of meeting international market specifications.

Industry leaders say investment in infrastructure is needed to scale Australia's hemp sector.

The NSW Association President, Jaimie Milling said "We can assure NSW growers, processors and manufacturers they will be given a voice at the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Senate Inquiry this Friday".

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