

INDUSTRIAL HEMP, LEGISLATION

308. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

- (1) Does the minister acknowledge the success of recent trials conducted by the Department of Agriculture into growing industrial hemp, a very versatile and potentially valuable plant, which is not to be confused with its notorious cousin - an illicit, harmful drug?
- (2) Will the minister introduce legislation to this Parliament soon to remove the legal obstacles to the production and processing of industrial hemp?
- (3) If not, why not?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for the interesting question he has posed.

- (1) Yes, I acknowledge the success of the trials. I have analysed the trial results and they seem to have been quite successful in their tonnage yields. I think the range was between 10 and 15 tonnes a hectare, which seemed to be a very good yield.

Hon Barry House: It is more successful in some parts than in others.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I understand that.

- (2) Yes, legislation will be introduced to allow for the furtherance of the industry. It is likely not to be stand-alone legislation, but legislative amendments at least to the Poisons Act and possibly to the Police Act. However, I am not sure about that. I will not necessarily introduce that specific legislation. I cannot be precise about the form of legislative amendment required, because a recommendation will be made by an interdepartmental task force that is currently afoot. It has already met on at least one occasion and has made reasonable progress. Some drafting instructions may also have been left over from the previous Government, but I have not seen them at this stage. The task force is working with those instructions. The task force is attempting to ensure that new legislation will deal with all the by-products of the hemp plant, including the seeds and the leaf, rather than deal with simply the fibre component of the hemp crop, as the Victorian legislation does - as a result of which it has run into some trouble.

Hon Barry House: That is important because a lot of the potential lies in the seed.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, exactly. Apparently the oil production potential is very good. I am hopeful that we will be at an advanced stage of preparation, at least in drafting instructions, by the end of this year. I understand progress is being made at a good rate.

- (3) Not applicable.