

INDUSTRIAL HEMP — AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

82. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to the colleges of agriculture across the state, including in Denmark, which I recently visited, and the great work that they do in educating our young people on subjects such as cropping, livestock, aquaculture, and building and construction.

- (1) With the increasing interest in industrial hemp as a crop both here in Australia and overseas, would the minister consider integrating the current research from the hemp variety field trials conducted by AgriFutures Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and allow industrial hemp to be grown at an agricultural college in Western Australia?
- (2) If so, would the minister consider also allowing students to process the hemp bast, hurd or seed into viable building or food products as a way of diversifying agricultural opportunities in Western Australia?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I, too, have been to the WA College of Agriculture Denmark campus; its students produce wonderful products.

- (1) However, each of the Western Australian colleges of agriculture has an agricultural advisory committee made up of agricultural industry representatives. The role of the committees is to provide advice on a range of industry matters, including what crops to grow. As at 29 February 2024, four of the five Western Australian colleges of agriculture report that their agricultural advisory committees have not considered introducing the growing of industrial hemp into the farm program. In 1996–97, the Western Australian College of Agriculture in Denmark undertook a trial with the Department of Agriculture to grow a single industrial hemp crop. No further crops have been grown.
- (2) The vast bulk of raw produce is sold to the market, as the Western Australian colleges of agriculture do not have processing capabilities onsite.