

7 February 2022

Hon. Dr Brian Follett Walker MLC
Chair, Select Committee into Cannabis and Hemp
Inquiry into Cannabis and Hemp
PO Box A11
Parliament House
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Chair

INQUIRY INTO CANNABIS AND HEMP

Rio Tinto appreciates the opportunity to have been invited to make a submission to the Inquiry into Cannabis and Hemp.

We support the submissions made by The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia (CMEWA) as well as The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (CCIWA).

The issues the Inquiry is seeking to address have the potential to impact many industries across Western Australia. As such, we believe it is important that these submissions are made by industry representative bodies. Rio Tinto would like to submit our letter of support and reaffirm the recommendations made in the CMEWA and CCIWA submissions to the Committee.

Rio Tinto's Western Australian operations include Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO), Dampier Salt Limited, Argyle Diamonds and Rio Tinto Exploration, which was responsible for the recent Winu copper discovery in the Patterson region. RTIO is Australia's largest iron ore producer. Its Pilbara operations have been operating for more than 50 years, and encompass a network of 16 mines, four independent port terminals, a 1,700-kilometre rail network, and related infrastructure.

Rio Tinto's Western Australian workforce comprises more than 16,000 employees, of which 2,901 were FIFO workers from regional centres as of July 2021. The total number of contractors working on Rio Tinto sites is, on average, almost 30,000 people each year. We are committed to safety and ensuring all people go home safely each day.

We support the Inquiries efforts to investigate the regulation of Cannabis and Hemp specifically potential deregulation with regards to medicinal uses where that can assist people with chronic illness and pain. However, we would urge caution noting the widespread impacts the use of cannabinoid products can have on industry and the safety of the workplace. Specifically, within the context of the resources sector and individual's fitness for work.

Rio Tinto has experienced challenges with these matters in other jurisdictions across Australia and globally. We would urge the Committee to not only consider the potential benefits to improve management of chronic pain and other health conditions but to consider the risks of full deregulation, specifically with respect to worker safety and potential issues with the application of the law and compliance with our WHS obligations.

Increasing the availability and use of cannabinoid products for medical conditions could create challenges for high-risk workplaces. For example, in the resources sector to implement and undertake a zero-tolerance drug and alcohol policy for workers could create challenges given the interaction with relevant equal opportunity and discrimination legislation.

Any changes must be considered, and risks evaluated to understand the full impact the changes could pose to safety on site as well as potential legal and administrative challenges placed on employers.

In considering any potential amendment to the current legislation regulating the lawful use of cannabis in Western Australia, we support the recommendations from the CCIWA and CMEWA submissions for the committee to consider.

It is critically important for Rio Tinto that any reforms to the availability of cannabis and hemp products do not negatively impact workplace safety.

Please contact Sarah Clancy, Senior Manager Government Relations, to discuss any elements of this submission.

Yours Sincerely

Laura Thomas
Vice President – Human Resources Iron Ore
Rio Tinto