

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Industrial Hemp Industry in Victoria

Melbourne – Thursday 7 September 2023

MEMBERS

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Sarah Mansfield

Rachel Payne

WITNESS

Dr John Wightman.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Industrial Hemp Industry in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, Dr Wightman, I will just get committee members to introduce themselves to you.

Renee HEATH: My name is Renee Heath, from Eastern Victoria Region.

Bev McARTHUR: Bev McArthur, from Western Victoria Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, from Western Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Northern Victoria Region.

John BERGER: John Berger, Southern Metro.

Rachel PAYNE: Rachel Payne, South-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

John WIGHTMAN: You say you come from a region. What are your roles in the regions?

The CHAIR: Sure. I will read in your parliamentary privilege and then I will explain to you.

John WIGHTMAN: Okay.

The CHAIR: All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders, therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website. For the Hansard record, can you please state your name and the organisation, if any, that you are appearing on behalf of.

John WIGHTMAN: Okay. That is fine.

The CHAIR: Can we get your full name for the Hansard record?

John WIGHTMAN: My name is John Anthony Wightman.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. Thank you. Just to answer your question, we are all members of the Legislative Council, which is the upper house in Victoria. It is separated into eight regions. There are five members in each region, and we all represent different areas of the state. We just say what regions we represent to give context about committee members and what areas of Victoria we represent.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, that is fine.

The CHAIR: Beautiful.

John WIGHTMAN: I just wanted to know if I am talking to agricultural people or normal people.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Bev McARTHUR: Hang on a minute, are you saying agricultural people are not normal?

John WIGHTMAN: I can say that; I am one.

The CHAIR: We all have different and diverse backgrounds, but a number of us do represent regional areas where agriculture is a big industry.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, sure.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they are kept to 10 minutes maximum – you do not have to go that long if you do not want to – and then we will ask you questions.

John WIGHTMAN: Okay, that is fine. By original profession I am a pest manager dealing with insect pests, diseases and so on, but to be able to do that properly you have to understand the crop that you are working with. That was the first lesson I learned when I became a professional. I have quite a wide knowledge of growing crops beyond my special subject area.

By coincidence I lived in a small town in Queensland up to a few months ago where Phil Warner used to live, or does live, and he was the founder of Ecofibre, which is Australia's first hemp company. He worked with an agronomist, and I was brought in to do their reporting and write up the reports for, in this case, the New South Wales department of agriculture. I got to know hemp from that side, and I have also taken an interest in it ever since. About five years ago I was part of a very small group that ran a workshop for farmers in Tocal in the Hunter Valley. It was actually the first farmers workshop in Australia as such. After that I joined with another guy to become a hemp consultant, and I have been working with farmers ever since to help them grow hemp.

Hemp is an interesting kind of crop. From a farming point of view – from my point of view – it is an arable crop, which has its own special characteristics. In terms of the nutrients it requires, fertiliser, insect pests, diseases and so on, it is just another crop. But it is not an easy crop to grow – that is something which I have to stress. Like many other people in the industry, I am somewhat bemused by the restrictions and regulations that govern this crop. The species is *cannabis sativa*, and there are perhaps 2000 variants or varieties of this particular crop. Only a few are narcotic. I have heard 12 varieties are narcotics – can produce narcosis. I imagine there is something like 100 varieties which we can call industrial hemp crops. The other group is medicinal, and they are very special – they need special growing conditions et cetera. My point is: I find the negative aspect of hemp is the fact that there are regulations governing its growing, which are not quite necessary. I think it is easing. I should also say that I have worked a lot in Queensland, and Queensland is the extreme in terms of regulation. It is very difficult to get a licence in Queensland. I have worked with farmers where it has taken over a year to get a licence – and that was just for research.

That introduces me and introduces one thing which I brought up in response to your questions. I would also like to say that I have reread my response, and I did not find it very good – it needed proper editing. I did it in a hurry, and I apologise for typos. Okay, so that is basically all I wanted to say as an intro.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. Thank you very much. We will commence with questions. Each member will ask you questions for about 5 minutes, and then if there is time we will go around again.

John WIGHTMAN: That is fine, yes.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. Ms Payne.

Rachel PAYNE: Thank you, and thank you, Dr Wightman, for your submission. I really enjoyed reading your submission. I think that you showed the versatility of the plant but also some of the many opportunities that are potential with hemp. I want to just tease out: you mentioned restrictions and regulations that govern this crop, and considering that you have worked all over the world as well as in many parts of Australia, can you reflect on what are some of the regulations in other jurisdictions that have worked and that maybe as a committee we should be considering?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. I have worked on many crops in many countries, but I have only worked on hemp in Australia. But I am taking an interest in what happens in other countries, because I am working on a

book with another fellow which will have to cover this kind of thing. In Tanzania, in Africa, I have talked to people there about growing hemp and they say, 'Absolutely no way, full stop – it will never be legal.' Even though you can walk down the road and people offer stuff for you to smoke, it is not legal to grow as an industrial crop. In other places it is much more lax – well, we know that. In Canada especially it has taken on almost as a primary industry. America, they have got their problems, but it is growing. Europe, I do not know if the restrictions are worse than here or different; kind of the 1 per cent THC level seems to be the accepted threshold for industrial hemp internationally, and that is fine. It was 3 or 3.5 per cent, and I think that was a bit low. But any kind of industrial hemp you try to smoke is going to give you a headache. I am not talking from personal experience, but that is what I understand.

But our threshold is fine. It is difficult for the farmer and it is difficult for the people taking the samples to know exactly when to take that sample to test for THC levels, because it changes as the plant develops. One report I have read shows that it slowly increases to a peak at a certain stage of flowering, then it drops off again. But that could be a varietal response or it could be a local environmental response.

Rachel PAYNE: And as I mentioned earlier, you talk about the versatility of hemp, and one of the points that you make is around promoting hemp products for recyclable food packaging. Are you talking about hemp plastics and things like that in that statement, and do you mind elaborating a little bit more on that?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes – I cannot remember what I was thinking about now. Tell me what I said. I have got it here, but –

Rachel PAYNE: 'Promote hemp products for recyclable food packaging.'

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, I think it was more paper or cardboard in that respect, where you get a very strong box for the food or whatever which can go straight into compost.

Rachel PAYNE: Another suggestion you made is around biofuel and electricity.

John WIGHTMAN: Absolutely, yes.

Rachel PAYNE: Do you want to talk a little bit more about the opportunities that could present, for us to consider as a committee?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, that is quite a big subject.

Rachel PAYNE: It is.

John WIGHTMAN: Well, starting at the beginning –

Rachel PAYNE: I guess just so that we have a basic understanding of how hemp can be used to make that –

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, you know about the generation, of the different processes which hemp can be put through to make electricity? Is that what you are after?

Rachel PAYNE: Yes, if you do not mind explaining to us what the opportunities are to make biofuel and electricity from hemp.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, I know some bits better than others on this, because I have worked with oilseed crops which have been used for energy production, for diesel production. The first thing to say is that industrial hemp is one of the fastest sequesterers of carbon. It grows extremely quickly, and there are debates about whether a hemp plant is a herb or whether it is a tree. Some people say it is a tree. I think it is somewhere in between. I do not think you can actually draw a line. The point is that it grows extremely quickly. It grows to 5 metres in five months. You think of sugar cane. People talk about it. It is much slower to grow. Once it is established you can harvest it every year if you want to really destroy your land, but that is what people do. There are grasses which grow in a similar way, but they do not have the same concentration of carbon in them, and carbon and energy are often considered in the same breath.

The easiest one to say is that the seed oil can be converted to biodiesel. That is by a process, the name of which I have forgotten, but it can be done. You could put hemp oil straight into a tractor and you could drive it. And you get – are you worried?

The CHAIR: No, I just keep watching the clock.

John WIGHTMAN: Oh, okay. I will hurry up. But that is a waste of beautiful oil; you would never want to put hemp oil into a tractor. It is much better to drink it. But then the biomass can be processed. It can be fermented to make ethanol. For that you need fairly young plants, which are easy to break down, or it can go through a process called pyrolysis, which yields something called biofuel. Biofuel is something which has quite a lot of processing, but you can get quite a lot off a hemp crop, and that can be used as fuel. You can take it through to avgas if you want to, for aeroplanes. Any kind of low-quality fuel it can be used for as well – for ships, for instance. There is apparently a big project in Papua New Guinea under planning – I am not allowed to say any more – for fuelling big container carriers. I can go into a lot more detail, but you are looking at the clock.

Rachel PAYNE: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Sorry. We just need to move on. Thanks, Ms Payne. Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, and thanks for your appearance today. I am just interested in the crop itself. You line it up more with sugar cane as opposed to anything else.

John WIGHTMAN: No, it is not like anything else.

John BERGER: Okay. I am just trying to, in terms of its structure –

John WIGHTMAN: I am just talking about the amount of biomass it produces.

John BERGER: What I am trying to get in my mind is, like your normal cereal crops or whatever, you can only cut this once and you have to wait five months for it to grow back up to its full potential, or is it –

John WIGHTMAN: No, I guess you could do that, but you do not do that. You harvest, you sell it here in November, December, January, February, March, and you harvest it perhaps in March or April for a fibre crop. Then you plough it in, and you get all the goodies from the roots. A lot of the phytochemicals in hemp are actually there because they protect it from insects and from diseases. That is how they have evolved and that is how they have become drugs, for instance – I mean pharmaceuticals. So you plough the leaves into the soil, it cleans up the soil and then you put in a legume. Then next autumn you plant corn, or wheat, rather, or barley or canola, as part of a rotation. You can let it regrow; I have never seen people do it on purpose, but I have seen it regrow from bits of stubble.

John BERGER: I am just trying to understand it as a crop.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, I know. Consider it to be something like corn, where it grows to a certain height and then you can harvest it – or sorghum or whatever.

John BERGER: In terms of its nutritional value for livestock, what form would you give it to them in? Is it pellets or is it –

John WIGHTMAN: That is another question. Do you want to talk about the stockfeed?

John BERGER: Yes.

John WIGHTMAN: Okay. What you said is right. You can turn it into pellets. You could actually graze the crop. You could let it come to this height – say, 60 centimetres – and put stock in to feed on it, and then let it grow again and you can harvest seed or something like that. But you know the problem with this, don't you? You cannot sell the meat because the meat will have a residue of THC in it, and you are not allowed to sell meat which has THC in it. There is a threshold –

The CHAIR: It will not affect me.

John WIGHTMAN: Sorry?

The CHAIR: I just said it will not affect me. We were talking about meat eaters before.

John WIGHTMAN: All right. The threshold is so small it is virtually undetectable, and nobody is going to get high eating lamb with that small amount in it. That is nothing to do with your Parliament, that is federal regulation. Okay.

John BERGER: Okay. In terms of water, is a high content of water used to grow these crops?

John WIGHTMAN: It needs water. In Victoria you have to have irrigation. It is much the same as cotton.

John BERGER: So you could not dry grow it?

John WIGHTMAN: People say you can. You can dry grow it if it rains, right? But that is a bit dodgy at the moment. People are talking about dryland hemp, but we have just come out of La Niña and we are just going into El Niño. That is going to make a difference.

John BERGER: It is a lot harder. Okay.

The CHAIR: Well, thanks, Mr Berger. I am really interested in the use of the hemp plant as a livestock feed. I had not heard of that until this morning. Can you please explain to us some of the benefits that would come with legalising hemp for that purpose?

John WIGHTMAN: Well, it just gives farmers an extra reason for growing hemp. At the moment farmers are a bit unsure. But there is always more than one reason for growing this crop, which is why it is unique. You can feed them on the stubble after a harvest. If you can put your livestock into a field after you have taken the seed off and the grain off and the stubble is there and they feed on the stubble, that is fine. That will happen. It is good quality feed. It is as good or better than most kinds of stuff that farmers grow for feeding cattle or sheep.

The CHAIR: And is it better environmentally as well?

John WIGHTMAN: Well, you need less pesticides for growing hemp. That is one thing which is true.

The CHAIR: We had a witness this morning say that it would reduce emissions, feeding hemp instead of hay to cattle.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, well, everything produces emissions from cattle.

The CHAIR: Sorry, reduce emissions.

John WIGHTMAN: Reduce? I do not know how. It could be true, but I do not know that that is true.

The CHAIR: No, that is totally fine. Okay. Thanks very much. Dr Mansfield.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. Just going back to water use, I think in your submission you mentioned that you could potentially link energy crops to sewage treatment facilities as a source of water. Can you expand on this and how and why this is possible with hemp?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. The disadvantage of growing an arable crop as an energy source is that it is taking the space of a food crop, okay? That is one of the no-noes. It is not necessarily true, because it would be part of a rotation and so on. I mentioned that because using sewage waste is an excellent source of water. There are probably some fertilisers and minerals mixed up with it, as you can imagine. It offsets the argument about not using an energy crop to replace a food crop. The other thing is that hemp sequesters toxic chemicals and heavy metals, so it actually cleans up sewage and mess like that.

Sarah MANSFIELD: And then if you were to use that as a fuel, is there any problem with using something that maybe has absorbed these chemicals or –

John WIGHTMAN: I do not know. I do not think so. There would be an ash problem with the heavy metals, but I have not got into that in great detail –

Sarah MANSFIELD: That is okay.

John WIGHTMAN: because nobody has actually tried it.

Sarah MANSFIELD: No worries. That was my next question. Is this sort of model –

John WIGHTMAN: There are people in WA who have talked about growing hemp on a sewage farm.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay.

John WIGHTMAN: And I have been asked if it is possible. I said, ‘Yes, good idea.’ But I have heard nothing more since.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay. In your opening you mentioned that hemp is not an easy crop to grow.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Is that in reference to the regulatory challenges or the plant itself being difficult?

John WIGHTMAN: The plant itself.

Sarah MANSFIELD: And what about it makes it difficult?

John WIGHTMAN: It needs a lot of fertiliser. It needs a specific fertiliser mix. It needs certain micronutrients – for instance, silica. It uses a lot of silica, and if you give it silica, it just goes wild – not wild but grows well. It needs a lot of water. The water has to be at the right time. If the soil gets too wet, the crop dies, so you have to have a slope to make sure there is no ponding of water. Certain soil types are not very good for it. I call it a prima donna in that if you look after her, she is going to perform beautifully and the audience is going to be really pleased, but if she is insulted in some way – she does not get what she wants – she will not perform.

Sarah MANSFIELD: So we have heard from a number of people and seen through the submissions that the regulatory barriers are quite significant and that they are a major deterrent for people growing hemp.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes.

Sarah MANSFIELD: We have talked about how removing those would certainly help. Are there other things that would help to overcome some of those, I guess, technical barriers in growing hemp that perhaps government could play a role in?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. Look, that is a whole different subject. I have not talked about research. AgriFutures is doing a job with the varieties at the moment, but there is probably 10 to 20 times more research that should be done. If your government can support research as required by Victorian farmers, that would be absolutely wonderful.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay, thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Dr Mansfield. Mrs McArthur.

Bev McARTHUR: Thank you very much, Dr Wightman. You mentioned that it is not –

John WIGHTMAN: Seriously, call me John.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay, John. Mrs McArthur was my mother-in-law actually too. Why is it not an easy crop to grow? You mentioned it was not an easy crop to grow. Could you expand on that?

John WIGHTMAN: I just explained it needs special agronomic requirements.

Bev McARTHUR: Oh, the thing you told Dr Mansfield.

John WIGHTMAN: It needs water; it needs the right fertilisers. It has to be planted, sown, at the right time of year. That is something else, because the length of the night switches on the flowering process, so it has to be at a certain stage.

Bev McARTHUR: It is not an easy crop to grow, so we need quite skilled farmers who know what they are doing.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, that is right. For instance, the soil has to be prepared absolutely properly because the seed has to go that far in. If it goes much deeper, the tops will not come up. If you do it any lower, any thinner, it will dry out. There must be water in the soil before the seed goes in. There are all kinds of –

Bev McARTHUR: So you would not be able to grow it anywhere? I mean, we almost heard before that we would need a million acres, I think the vote was, to be growing it. But it will not be able to be grown everywhere, will it? It will be specific areas.

John WIGHTMAN: No, but there are so many places in Victoria which are absolutely perfect for it.

Bev McARTHUR: Can you expand? Whereabouts would you suggest?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. I am from Queensland. I have only lived here for six months, so I cannot tell you everything. But there are places around, say, Hamilton, which are very good, way over towards the west. I can only think of Bordertown, which is in South Australia, but in that kind of area. I guess it is north of Warrnambool.

Bev McARTHUR: So that is quite a low rainfall area?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, that is why I say you need irrigation anyway.

Bev McARTHUR: Irrigation?

John WIGHTMAN: You have to have irrigation, yes.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, that will be a bit suspect around Hamilton.

John WIGHTMAN: Is it? Okay. Look, I do not know these details, but I have seen it growing there quite well.

Bev McARTHUR: Yes, I am not sure there would be much opportunity for that there. You said that the government regulations are not necessary. Which ones would you suggest we get rid of?

John WIGHTMAN: What I was thinking of this morning was the thing about testing for THC. Why not have a spot check so farmers have to be on the ball – they have to grow the right varieties and got the right quality seed? If we just had, say, 10 per cent of the crops harvested, that would save a lot of money from both ends. There are all kinds of things, like keeping a register of people who go into the field, which I think is quite strange. You may have dropped that one, I do not know, because I know I am biased by Queensland circumstances. I would have to go through them one by one with you.

Bev McARTHUR: Would you like to take that on notice – perhaps provide us with a list of the regulations you think that are unnecessary?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, I could do that.

Bev McARTHUR: Yes, and then you could just happily do it at home.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes.

Bev McARTHUR: I think you also said it takes over a year to get a licence. That does seem –

John WIGHTMAN: That was in Queensland.

Bev McARTHUR: Oh, in Queensland. Are you familiar with Victoria? Is it that length of time?

John WIGHTMAN: Queensland, New South Wales, WA – they are fine. The farmers are not so restricted – but they are restricted, and it costs, to my way of thinking, quite a lot of money.

Bev McARTHUR: Yes. And it is a year in Victoria, is it, get a licence? Does it take a year in Victoria?

John WIGHTMAN: No, no.

Bev McARTHUR: No.

John WIGHTMAN: No.

Bev McARTHUR: So it is only in Queensland it takes a year?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, I was saying in Queensland. It is very restrictive there.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. Well, I guess we cannot be answerable for Queensland.

John WIGHTMAN: To be quite honest, the attitude in Victoria is quite refreshing.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. Because we heard contrary before – that the regulations here are not conducive to new entrants into the market.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, but they are worse in other places.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. So you think it is okay to have animals consuming the crop? It is fine – it is not going to affect the food chain?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes.

Bev McARTHUR: What evidence have you got of that?

John WIGHTMAN: Because the levels of THC being found in flesh are so small. It is virtually undetectable. I cannot remember – it is something like 500 parts per million, which is not very much at all.

Bev McARTHUR: Finish?

The CHAIR: You can do one more question.

Bev McARTHUR: One more. To benefit from economies of scale Victoria's hemp industry needs 'to synchronise production and processing'. It would seem logical, but I can just imagine maybe the planning restraints or people wondering whether they want a production plant next to where they perhaps are living, because some of these hemp farms might be not very large. In large agricultural areas they might be small properties. So you need a production plant close by, because we have heard you have got to get the product quickly into the processing chain.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes, that is right – exactly that.

Bev McARTHUR: How do you think we would go getting a production plant built near the farm all over the place?

John WIGHTMAN: Well, this is something I am quite strong on. I took a hemp hub, which is in an area of hemp farmers where there is a multifunctional processing plant –

Bev McARTHUR: And there might be a cooperative or something.

John WIGHTMAN: Exactly that, a cooperative.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay.

John WIGHTMAN: A cooperative can include retail outlets and all kinds of stuff. It can be a base for researchers to get with the farmers to supply information. All right?

Bev McARTHUR: A hub?

John WIGHTMAN: A hub.

Bev McARTHUR: A hub for hemp, a hemp hub.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mrs McArthur.

John WIGHTMAN: I have sent documentation which is attached to my original thing about that, and that is something where a government department could really get behind the industry and be of considerable help. The reason for that is that from any one hemp plant you get more than one product, and processors are normally only interested in one product, which means that the rest of the plant goes to waste. That is the basis of that. That is something I have got –

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. I think my time is up.

The CHAIR: Yes. Thanks, Mrs McArthur. Dr Heath.

Renee HEATH: Thank you. Thank you so much for your submission and also your presentation. I have got a couple of questions from your written one. You did mention, and you mentioned it before as well, that there are only very small amounts of THC found in the flesh of animals and that this needs to be re-rationalised and that nobody is going to get high from eating roast lamb containing that amount.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes.

Renee HEATH: Then when I go to your hemp hub section, it talks about superfood, cold-pressed and quality edible oil and nutrient-rich flour, and then you talk about muesli, cosmetics and so forth. I actually read an article – there was a risk assessment done for Health Canada – that said no new products and cosmetics made from hemp – all of them pose an unacceptable risk to the health of consumers. It also says that hemp products may not be safe because even small amounts of THC may cause developmental problems, and those most at risk are children exposed in the womb or through breastmilk et cetera. Another article said that transfer of cannabinoids into the milk of dairy cows fed with industrial hemp could lead to increased THC exposure that exceeds acute reference dose. So is there any evidence that shows that it is safe? Because the two articles I have read say the contrary.

John WIGHTMAN: I do not know where you got that – that was from Canada?

Renee HEATH: They are two separate things, so there is a research article called ‘Transfer of cannabinoids into the milk of dairy cows fed with industrial hemp ...’.

John WIGHTMAN: Okay. The levels are so small. I cannot understand it. With oil, there are no nasty chemicals in hemp oil. It is pure. It is pressed out of the seed.

Renee HEATH: Are there any research articles you know of that back that up?

John WIGHTMAN: Sorry?

Renee HEATH: Are there any research articles you know of that back that up?

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. I cannot think of a paper saying that, because clearly – it is intuitively obvious.

Renee HEATH: Okay, so you just think that.

John WIGHTMAN: The only contamination – see, all the nasty chemicals grow on the leaves, on the outside of the plant, okay, on the little hairs. So there is no way that it can be inside the seed. The only way there can be contamination is if seed brushes against the leaves when it is harvested, but that is only the outside of the seed, the shell, and that is wasted. That is used as compost.

Renee HEATH: Okay, so just to clarify: you are not aware of any actual evidence, it is more just a feeling that it is safe?

John WIGHTMAN: No. The seed itself is sold in Australia as cosmetics. Have you heard of Good Country Hemp?

Renee HEATH: No.

John WIGHTMAN: Write it down: Good Country Hemp. They have their own website. Unfortunately they are not in Victoria. They are just across the border, in Bordertown, in fact. Have a look at what they are doing. It is fantastic. They are doing food products and cosmetics sold through the internet.

Renee HEATH: So where that information comes from, just in case you are interested, is a risk assessment done for Health Canada, so they stated those.

John WIGHTMAN: Could you send it to me?

The CHAIR: I think we can arrange for the secretariat to provide it to you.

John WIGHTMAN: Something like that, yes.

Renee HEATH: And then the second question I have is: you mentioned before that there needs to be 10 to 20 times more research done. Is this research around safety, or what areas do you think?

John WIGHTMAN: About growing it.

Renee HEATH: About growing it.

John WIGHTMAN: I am the only qualified entomologist working on hemp. I am not employed by anyone. I have no lab, I have nothing. I cannot do a proper job, so I just do what I can by observing and by experience. That is the same with pathologists. There are people that can identify things; there is no actual research on managing these things. That is just one example. Weeds are the same. I could speak for another half an hour about this, but I will not.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Thanks, Dr Heath. And thanks, Dr Wightman. We have run out of time and have another witness, but thank you very much for coming along today. I believe there are some questions you will be answering on notice, so committee staff will reach out to you about that and to provide that information from Dr Heath to you that she just mentioned.

John WIGHTMAN: Yes. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much again.

Witness withdrew.