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AIHA writes to ODC over 'restrictive' hemp interpretation



by ADAM SHELTON [HTTPS://WWW.CANNABIZ.COM.AU/AUTHOR/ADAM-SHELTON/](https://www.cannabiz.com.au/author/adam-sheldon/)
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The Australian Industrial Hemp Alliance (AIHA) has written to the Office of Drug Control (ODC) arguing Australia's regulatory approach to industrial hemp is suppressing investment, hurting farmers and leaving the nation out of step with major global markets.

The letter, addressed to the secretary of the ODC, said the regulator had adopted an overly restrictive interpretation of international drug laws regarding hemp.



AIHA president Charles Kovess with treasurer Arthur Wajs.

It followed AIHA president Charles Kovess appearing before a senate inquiry to explore the potential of the sector in April, **where he declared “hemp’s time is here”, < <https://www.cannabiz.com.au/hemps-time-has-come-senate-inquiry-is-told-as-govt-is-urged-to-remove-unnecessary-impediments/> >** as he told policymakers to free the crop from the shackles of overregulation.

“This isn’t about compliance – it’s about competitiveness,” Kovess said.

“Australia is imposing restrictions which go beyond what international law requires, and in doing so, we are effectively sabotaging our own farmers, our own industry and a massive economic opportunity.”

The AIHA argued current policy settings were creating uncertainty for farmers, processors and investors by limiting how low-THC hemp extracts and whole-plant hemp products could be used commercially.



KOVESS SAID.

“It is not what global regulators are doing, and it is leaving Australian producers locked out of their own supply chains.”

The submission said countries including Canada, Switzerland, China and members of the European Union had adopted frameworks allowing greater use of industrial hemp while remaining compliant with international treaty obligations.

The AIHA said Australia was now “uniquely out of step” with the impact already being felt through stalled investment and missed export opportunities.

It called for the ODC to revisit its position on low-THC hemp extracts and for a nationally consistent framework allowing greater use of the crop.

“We respect Australia’s international obligations, but those obligations must be applied correctly — not in a way that damages our own economy,” Kovess said.

“The opportunity is enormous. The only question is whether Australia chooses to seize it, or continue holding itself back.”

Kovess has been outspoken about the potential of industrial hemp in recent months, previously [telling *Cannabiz* the crop could help address Australia’s fuel crisis as a biofuel solution.](https://www.cannabiz.com.au/aiha-pitches-hemp-as-answer-to-fuel-crisis/) [< https://www.cannabiz.com.au/aiha-pitches-hemp-as-answer-to-fuel-crisis/>](https://www.cannabiz.com.au/aiha-pitches-hemp-as-answer-to-fuel-crisis/)

The ODC was contacted for comment.



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