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Front Cover

Without heat in a low-tech coir system **Thoang Trinh** grows gourmet cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, Asian vegetables and 'pick your own' strawberries near Geelong, Victoria.
Photo by **Raquel Neofit**



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FUTURE GROWING



9th - 12th JULY 2017
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PCA is proud to announce that our 14th biennial conference 'Future Growing' in Adelaide will now be called the;

Apex - Brinkman PCA Conference 2017.

The partnership between the two companies and PCA represents a long history of involvement and service to the Australian greenhouse and hydroponic industry for all concerned.

The conference, with a two day technical program, a trade expo and farm tours provides a fantastic opportunity for education, networking and business for busy growers, allied trade and interested parties.

Winter opens up a window when growers may be able to briefly depart their properties, to be inspired, meet their fellow growers, suppliers, researchers and technical presenters, who are normally scattered over this large nation and from every corner of the globe.

Adelaide was selected because of its first class venue, **Adelaide Convention Centre** (ACC) and the number and accessibility of quality farm tour sites.

Jeremy Badgery-Parker is Conference Chair heading up a Local Organising Committee (LOC) including PCA Life member **Rick Donnan, Saskia Blanch, Nam Ly, Folco Faber, Rachel Palumbo** and **Robert Hayes**.

The goodwill following on from our previous successes gives us confidence that this event will be another benchmark conference.

The 'Professional Conference Organiser' (PCO) for this event is **'All Occasions Group'** (AOG) who will look after all the administration - **Emma Wall** at AOG is ready to assist you.

SAVE THE DATE

July 9-12th 2017 'Future Growing'

Apex - Brinkman PCA Conference 2017

www.protectedcroppingaustralia.com

Contact Emma AOG Ph 08 8125 2200



Medicinal Cannabis Regulation



By PCA Chair **ROBERT HAYES**

The '2016 Medicinal Cannabis Symposium & Hemp Industry Expo' at Rosehill racecourse, Sydney May 14-15th was a breakthrough event that has brought into the public domain and opened the debate on how medicinal cannabis should be regulated.

Upwards of a thousand delegates attended two days of research presentations from eminent medical practitioners and researchers presenting papers from the USA, Italy, Spain Israel and elsewhere.

Confirming his Government's support for legal access to medicinal cannabis products, **NSW Premier Mike Baird** was the opening guest speaker at the recent United in Compassion (UIC) conference.

The NSW Premier emphasised that a lot had been achieved in the 20 months since his government had changed course on access to medicinal cannabis.

Regardless, the progress to date was not enough for some in the audience who heckled and called for complete decriminalisation of cannabis immediately.

This only serves to emphasise the controversial nature of the topic in this country.

UIC have been the key lobby group behind change in NSW and continue to lobby for more change at all levels of government.

UIC are "patient" advocates for access to medicinal cannabis and seek the introduction of 'full spectrum' whole natural botanical medicinal cannabis access to those in need.

This is a very different viewpoint to the Federal legislative approach which appears to be making regulation, research and manufacturing the core function, with patient interests a very minor part of the overall outcome.

The key presenter from our perspective, was Mr **Bill Turner, Head, Office of Drug Control, Assistant secretary, Regulatory Services Group, Department of Health.**

Bill has been intimately involved and central to the entire process of developing the Commonwealth's legislation to achieve the mandated outcome, whilst still complying with Australia's obligations under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

On the 24th of March 2016 the Australian Senate Government passed historic legislation to enable the local manufacture and distribution of medicinal cannabis products.

This legislation is laid over the top of all State legislation including NSW legislation, whilst Victorian



NSW Premier Mike Baird opened 'The United In Compassion 2016 Medicinal Cannabis Symposium and Hemp Industry Expo' in Sydney May 14-15th

state legislation which had been passed had to be modified.

Both NSW and Victoria have introduced what they describe as "compassionate access" schemes specifically targeting certain medical conditions such as epilepsy, which they have promised to broaden out as the evidence comes in.

Both states have also commenced their own cannabis production trials via their DPI.

Health Minister Sussan Ley said that under this scheme, a patient with a valid prescription can possess and use a medicinal cannabis product manufactured from cannabis plants legally cultivated in Australia, where the supply is appropriately authorised under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 and relevant state and territory legislation.

The Health Minister said the legislation did not relate to the decriminalisation of cannabis for general cultivation or recreational use.



Low THC industrial hemp plants in a coconut fibre drip system were displayed under approval of the NSW Dept. of Primary Industries at the expo.



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Upwards of eighty commercial exhibitors catered to those interested in legal access to medicinal cannabis, the highly regulated hemp industry and / or the cultivation of recreational cannabis.

“This is an historic day for Australia and the many advocates who have fought long and hard to challenge the stigma around medicinal cannabis products so genuine patients are no longer treated as criminals,” Ms Ley said. ***“This is the missing piece in a patient’s treatment journey and will now see seamless access to locally-produced medicinal cannabis products from farm to pharmacy.”***

Whilst the legislation has passed that will enable the medicinal use of cannabis products, the “regulations” which are the details of how that is to be achieved are still under development.

Bill Turner outlined how the Australian scheme is adopting the Canadian model, where production is strictly controlled to prevent diversion to the recreational market.

Cannabis extracts are manufactured into pharmaceutical grade, standardised doses and made available to patients with a prescription.

The current draft regulations are in hiatus due to the Federal election putting all government departments into caretaker mode, but are due for Ministerial declaration on October 1st this year.

Effectively, medicinal cannabis will have to pass all the tests in the same way as any other new pharmaceutical medication has to, in order to be able to be prescribed by a medical practitioner for a recognised medical condition.

Licensing is proposed to be broken down in to three types – research, manufacture and cultivation.

Once a licence has been obtained, a “permit” to produce will then be required for a specific strain of cannabis, which yields specific cannabinoid compounds that have been approved by the regulator.

So the process starts with research, that trials particular strains with one or more of the 120 different cannabinoids to be found.

This moves on to prove particular strains yield particular cannabinoid chemicals that have particular medical outcomes when administered at specified rates to treat a patient suffering a diagnosed condition or illness.



Apex-Brinkman PCA Conference 2017

Once the medicinal efficacy of a cannabis extract has been proven, a licenced manufacturer can then apply for a “Permit to Manufacture” a specific “product”.

Only then can a “Permit to cultivate strain X” be issued to the “Licenced Cultivator” to actually grow a crop.

Looking at the Canadian model, cultivation will involve high security structures, double keyed entry with separate spaces for propagation and production. All personnel will have to be screened and have a police clearance, operations will have to be monitored 24/7 with security cameras, and every aspect of the cultivation and operations will have to be systemised and recorded, which includes total quantity of crop produced, all waste matter securely destroyed and traceability from seed to final manufacture a requisite for all parties.

The delegates to the medicinal cannabis symposium were one of three distinct groupings in attendance at the entire event – those interested in legal access to medicinal cannabis, those interested in the now highly regulated Hemp industry, and those interested in the cultivation of recreational cannabis. The latter industry is currently estimated to be worth in excess of a billion dollars per annum nationally and is illegal in every state.

All in all it was quite a bizarre experience, listening to the Regulator describe how the objective was to protect Australia’s international reputation as a producer of high quality and strictly controlled “licit” drugs such as opium/morphine.

In the meantime upwards of eighty commercial exhibitors centred around the “illicit” recreational cannabis industry milled around in the exhibition hall and the whiff of vaped cannabis was ever present.

At the other end of the hall, a much smaller group of delegates listened to speakers and presenters on Hemp production, an emerging industry still suffering enormous regulatory constraints in this country.

Regardless, it was refreshing to hear two days of high quality science based presentations on the multiple ways in which cannabis extracts interact with the endo-cannabinoid system in our body.

Cannabinoids are a very important part of our body’s self-regulation mechanisms.

This is the start of an exciting new era in this country.

Whether there will be opportunities for “growers” to profit from this, or whether “big pharma” will capture all of the value by funding the research required remains to be seen.

PCA will keep you up to date as far as we can.

Robert Hayes, PCA Chair
chair@protectedcroppingaustralia.com

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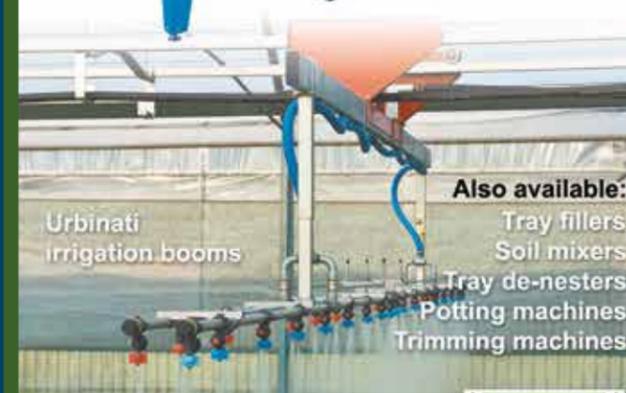


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