

A 2x3 grid of hemp seed images. The top row shows three seeds on brown, light green, and orange backgrounds. The bottom row shows three seeds on light green, dark red, and blue backgrounds.

# Australian Industrial Hemp Conference

Launceston, Tasmania  
22nd – 25th March 2022

## The Industrial Hemp Industry in Australia

Tim Schmidt  
President - Australian Hemp Council

## Where is our hemp industry today?

- The national crop has grown from 120 ha in 2014 to a peak of just over 4,000 ha in 2020. We are around 2,000 ha this season.
- Like any new emerging industry there are production, marketing and infrastructure development issues affecting growth.
- Key issues for hemp are government regulatory and legislative restrictions.

## Defining Industrial Hemp

It is important to clarify some definitions and terminology.

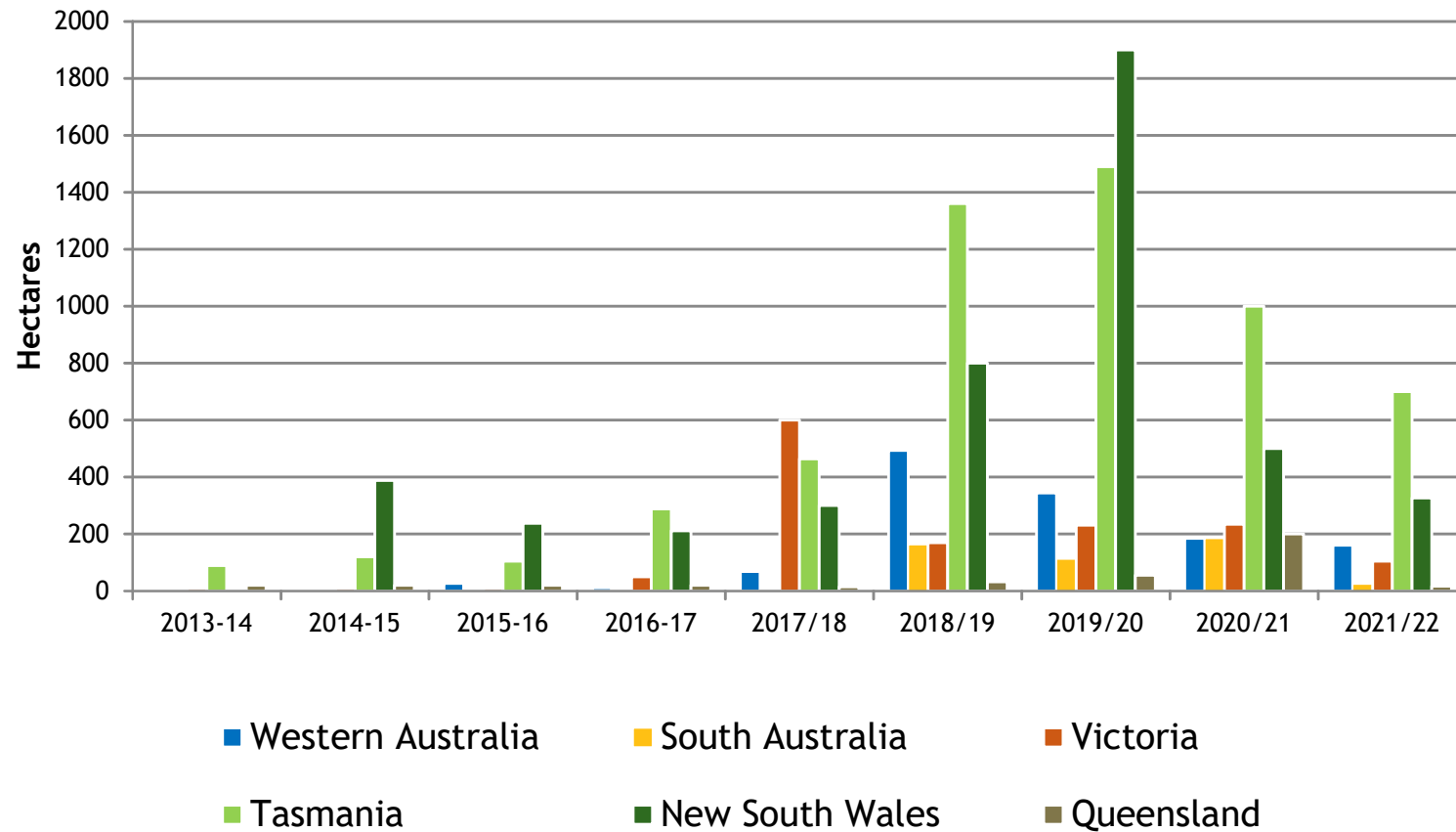
Industrial hemp is defined in Australia as cannabis with a THC level of 1% or less, except for the case in Victoria (a bit slow on the uptake), where 0.35% is the current limit, although legislation is pending to bring this in line with the other states. This is for hemp to be used as food and fibre. In the case of using seed for planting, it must be derived from a crop with a THC limit of 0.5% or less. For most of the rest of the world, the limit is 0.35.

## Defining Industrial Hemp

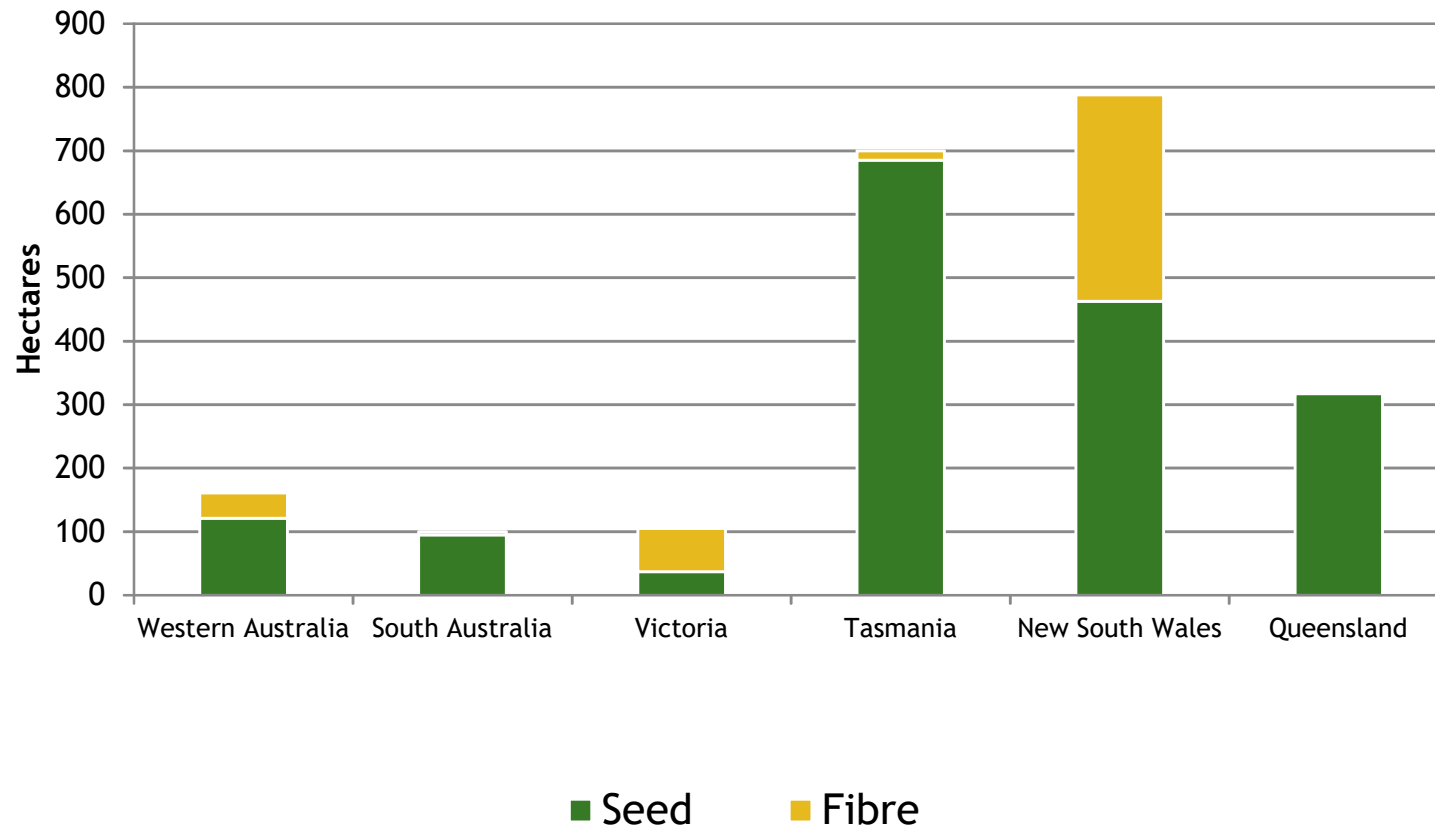
It is also important that we make a clear distinction between medicinal marijuana (high THC cannabis) and hemp (low THC). Both the Australian Hemp Council and the Australian Industrial Hemp Alliance are signatories to an international document defining hemp as:

*“a Cannabis sativa L. plant, or any part of that plant, in which the concentration of total delta-9 THC in the flowering tops is equal to or less than the regulated maximum level as established by authorities having jurisdiction. The term Hemp is synonymous with Industrial Hemp”*

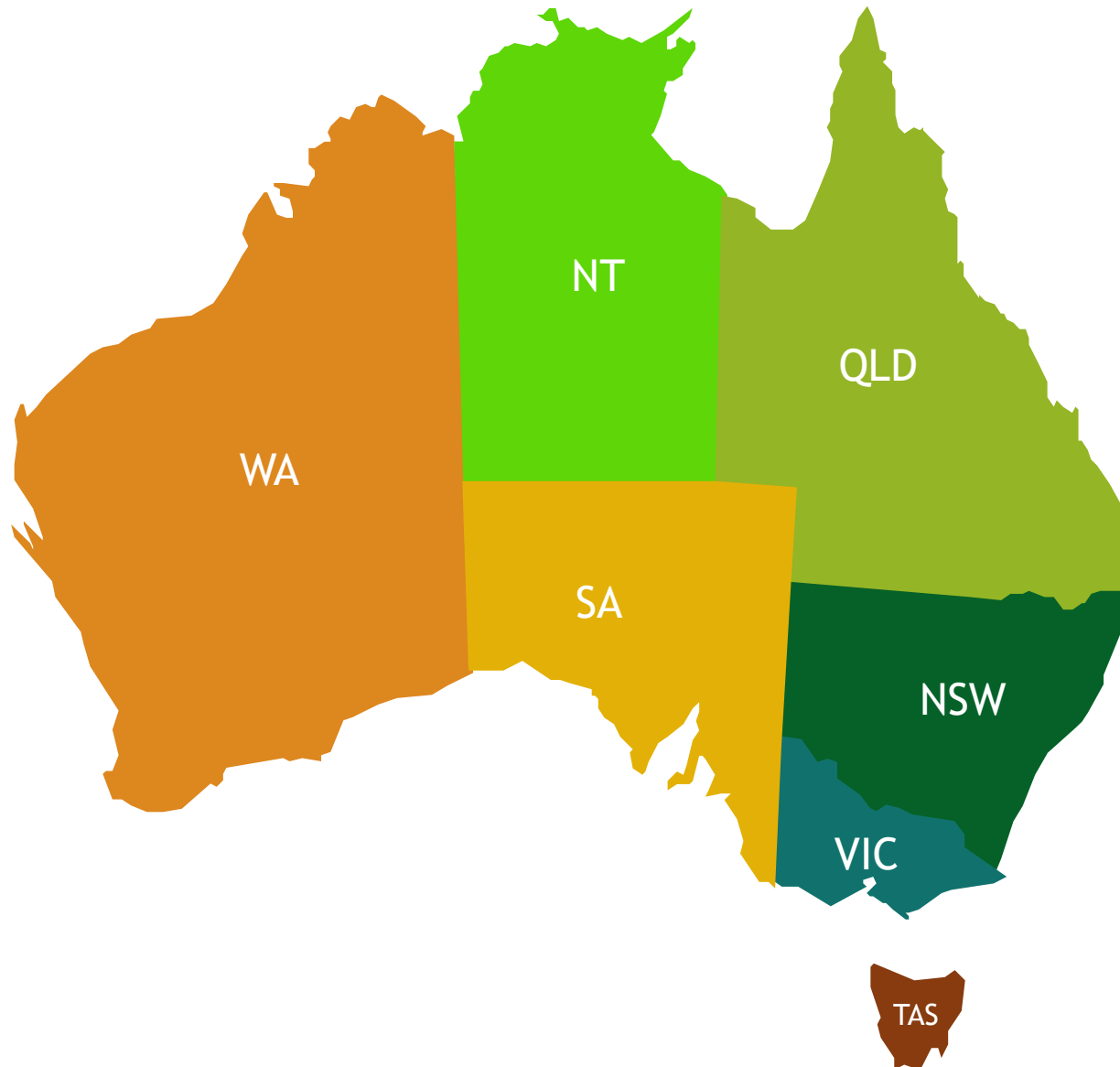
# Hemp production since 2013



# Hemp for Seed and Fibre 2021-22



# Developments around the country



# Developments around the country

## Western Australia

- There is a small but sound hurd for housing production industry established in WA.
- Recent bushfires showed how fire resistant hempcrete is, when a property was wiped out and all that remained were blocks of hempcrete.
- HempGro, a grower's cooperative, has been established for some years in southern WA and has been active in importing and trialling various hemp varieties.
- Ongoing research is also taking place in the north at Kunnanurra
- Some world first research on fodder for livestock in WA is turning up some really interesting results.

## Northern Territory

- The last to come on board with enabling legislation, some small trial work is being attempted.
- Plans are being explored for significant industry establishment.

# Developments around the country

## South Australia

- Mark Skewes from PIRSA has been conducting trials over the last few years resulting in some very useful results.
- Good Country Hemp has set up a vertically integrated business which is making an important contribution SA industry development.

## Queensland

- This is the only state to operate the industry under the misuse of drugs act, whereas all other states and NT have specific hemp legislation.
- Whilst there is great opportunity for a thriving fibre industry in QLD, the government there provides very little industry support.
- Also noteworthy is the choice not to participate in the Industrial Hemp Variety Trials which would be partly funded by Agrifutures.

# Developments around the country

## New South Wales

- NSW has so far declined to participate in the National Variety Trials.
- A lot of fibre trial work is taking place in NSW and some promising synergies between the cotton and hemp industries have been identified, both as a break crop and a supplement to cotton clothing.
- A research community in NSW is very keen to help the industrial hemp industry and a little support from the state government could provide an important stimulus.

## Victoria

- Victoria has still to bring its THC limits into line with the rest of the country. As a result a potential may have been lost to Tasmania due to outdated and inappropriate regulations.
- Fibre cropping research and trials are being carried out giving the industry vital knowledge and experience.

# Developments around the country

## Tasmania

- Tasmania has greatly benefitted from the tripartite political support and a bureaucracy familiar with our industry. It was the state ministers of the day that got the hemp for food ruling over the line in 2017.
- The industry is now well established here with good infrastructure and farming practices.
- Well over half the hemp food in Australia is grown in Tasmania each year.

Also note EcoFibre (Ananda Foods) have for years invested in hemp production and genetics across Australia which has been of great benefit to our industry.

## AHC Principles & Objectives

- For those who don't know, the Australian Hemp Council is a 7 member council with representatives from each state and the Northern Territory.
- It is primarily a grower and processor driven-and-funded organisation, focusing on addressing issues impacting the industry whilst engaging with Government and community.
- The members of the council are working to drive policies that will foster productivity of the Australian Hemp Industry with a specific focus on improving the industry's capacity to compete at a global level, thus ensuring long term sustainability of a profitable industry.

## 6 Key Objectives

- ❑ Communication & Industry Integrity
- ❑ Chemical Applications
- ❑ Research
- ❑ Industry Trends
- ❑ Lobbying & State Regulation
- ❑ Seed Certification

## AHC achievements to date

- Established a network of industrial hemp associations
- Encourage Agrifutures to engage effectively with industry
- We have enabled the development of a comprehensive RD&E strategic plan
- We also contributed to Peter Del Santo's review the APVMA Ag Chem permits project.
- We are also please to support the current initiative to establish a national CRC
- We have been collating industry data on planting areas

# There is much more to do

- Research
- Marketing
- Industry deregulation

## Utilising the whole plant

- The industry is united in its primary aim to see **whole of plant use for industrial hemp** (low-THC cannabis) to maximise economic growth and environmental opportunities for Australia
- The global industrial hemp market size was valued at \$4.9 billion in 2019, and is projected to reach \$18.6 billion by 2027

## International developments

- Creating opportunities for change here in Australia
- December 2020, the United Nations moved cannabis from Schedule IV to Schedule 1 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
- November 2020, the European Court of Justice published a judgement stating that cannabidiol extracted from the cannabis plant should not be considered a drug under the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

# In Conclusion

- Industry unity and collaboration
- Extensive support and investment into Research
- Engagement of and education for community and government
- Changes in legislation and regulation to create industry opportunities for new investment.

We have in Australia great scientists, innovative processors, and great farmers, all we need now is good policy and we can make the rest happen