

Briefing for decision

Amendments for the deregulation of hemp

Date due to MO: 26 February 2026 **Action required by:** 07 April 2026

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Reference:** H2026078981

To: Hon David Seymour, Associate Minister of Health

Consulted: Health New Zealand:

Proactive release: This **title** is proposed by the Ministry of Health for proactive release:

Contact for telephone discussion

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Minister's office to complete:

- Approved Decline Overtaken by events
- Needs change Seen
- See Minister's Notes Withdrawn

Comment:

Briefing for decision

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Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Date:** 26 February 2026

To: Hon David Seymour, Associate Minister of Health

Purpose of report

1. This briefing provides you with a Cabinet Legislation Committee paper seeking approval to submit regulations to the Executive Council for the purposes of deregulating hemp.

Background

2. On 4 November 2025, Cabinet agreed to revoke the requirement to obtain a licence for hemp and agreed that activities currently requiring a licence may be undertaken without one, subject to specified conditions [EXP-25-MIN-0099].
3. New regulations have been drafted which give effect to Cabinet's decision to remove licensing requirements for hemp while retaining appropriate safeguards. These are:
 - a. Misuse of Drugs (Industrial Hemp) Regulations Revocation Order 2026;
 - b. Misuse of Drugs Amendment Regulations 2026;
 - c. Misuse of Drugs (Medicinal Cannabis) Amendment Regulations 2026.

Key proposals in the regulations

Misuse of Drugs (Industrial Hemp) Regulations Revocation Order 2026

4. The Misuse of Drugs (Industrial Hemp) Regulations 2006 will be revoked in full on the date of commencement. This will remove all previous licencing restrictions on the cultivation, possession, processing, procurement, and supply of hemp and hemp products in New Zealand.

Misuse of Drugs Amendment Regulations 2026

5. All hemp activities which previously required a licence will be permitted, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. That all hemp plants have a THC content less than 1% of the dry weight of plant;
 - b. That those wishing to cultivate hemp inform Police and MPI of their intention to cultivate within the 12 months prior to beginning cultivation.
6. The existing requirements for the import and export of hemp are unchanged: they are subject to Medsafe processes, and a criminal record check. Hemp products which were previously exempted from the requirement to obtain a Medsafe issued licence remain exempted.

7. A transitional scheme will be in place for current holders of a hemp cultivation licence issued under the old regulations. These licences will be revoked upon the commencement of new regulations, but growers will not have to notify Police and MPI before the date their revoked licence would have expired.

Misuse of Drugs (Medical Cannabis) Amendment Regulations 2026

8. Regulations which restrict the supply of hemp plant material and seeds to medicinal cannabis licence holders will be revoked.

Next steps

9. Following your consultation and incorporation of any agreed changes, the paper will be lodged with the Cabinet Office for consideration by the Cabinet Legislation Committee.
10. Once these regulations come into force, the Ministry will communicate the changes to affected stakeholders as appropriate.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- a) **Note** that Cabinet agreed to deregulate low-THC hemp and that the proposed regulations give effect to these decisions **Noted**
- b) **Agree** to undertake Ministerial consultation from Tuesday 24 March to Tuesday 07 April **Yes/No**
- c) **Agree** to lodge the paper with the Cabinet Office by 10am Thursday 16 April dependant on any changes from ministerial and departmental feedback. **Yes/No**



Allison Bennett
Group Manager, Health System Settings
Strategy & Policy
Date: 24/03/26

Hon David Seymour
Associate Minister of Health
Date:

ENDS.

PROACTIVELY RELEASED