



# **COOK ISLANDS CANNABIS REFORM**

**PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW  
19 DEC, 2022**

# A. BACKGROUND



## REFERENDUM

The result of the referendum held on August 1, 2022 was:

62% of voters agreed that our cannabis laws should be reviewed to allow for:

1. Research
2. Medicinal use



## NSDA+ OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO MEDICAL CANNABIS

- Healthy population
- Environment
- Economic diversity.
- Economic opportunities for the Pa Enuā, empowerment through local ownership
- Education – innovation, research and development



## COMMITTEE FORMED - Dec 2022

- Chairperson - Tingika Elikana
- CLO – Solicitor General, Lauaki Annandale
- OPM, Chief of Staff, Ben Ponia
- TMO Secretary, Bob Williams and Pharmacist, Andrew Orange
- Business Representative, Mike Henry
- Community Representative, Marie Francis

## **PUBLIC POLICY CONCERNS:**

### **PROTECTING YOUTH**

Appropriate measures are required with medical cannabis to protect youth including:

an educational program for the public on medical cannabis; and  
the enforcement of criminal offences and penalties.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS**

It is important to ensure that the medical cannabis available is safe and appropriate for use. There are also potential concerns regarding risks such as driving under the influence of drugs and health and safety issues. These all need to be considered as part of the medical cannabis program.

### **CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND PENALTIES**

For illegal activity regarding non-medical use of cannabis.

## **EDUCATIONAL FOCUS:**

The science and practice surrounding the use of medical cannabis is developing rapidly in jurisdictions where this is legal. We can liaise with international experts to ensure we have current information for everyone.

### **GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS & MINISTRIES**

To enable strategy, policy and legislation to be developed, designed and maintained for our needs.

### **PUBLIC**

To ensure everyone has access to information and a channel for their questions and comments.

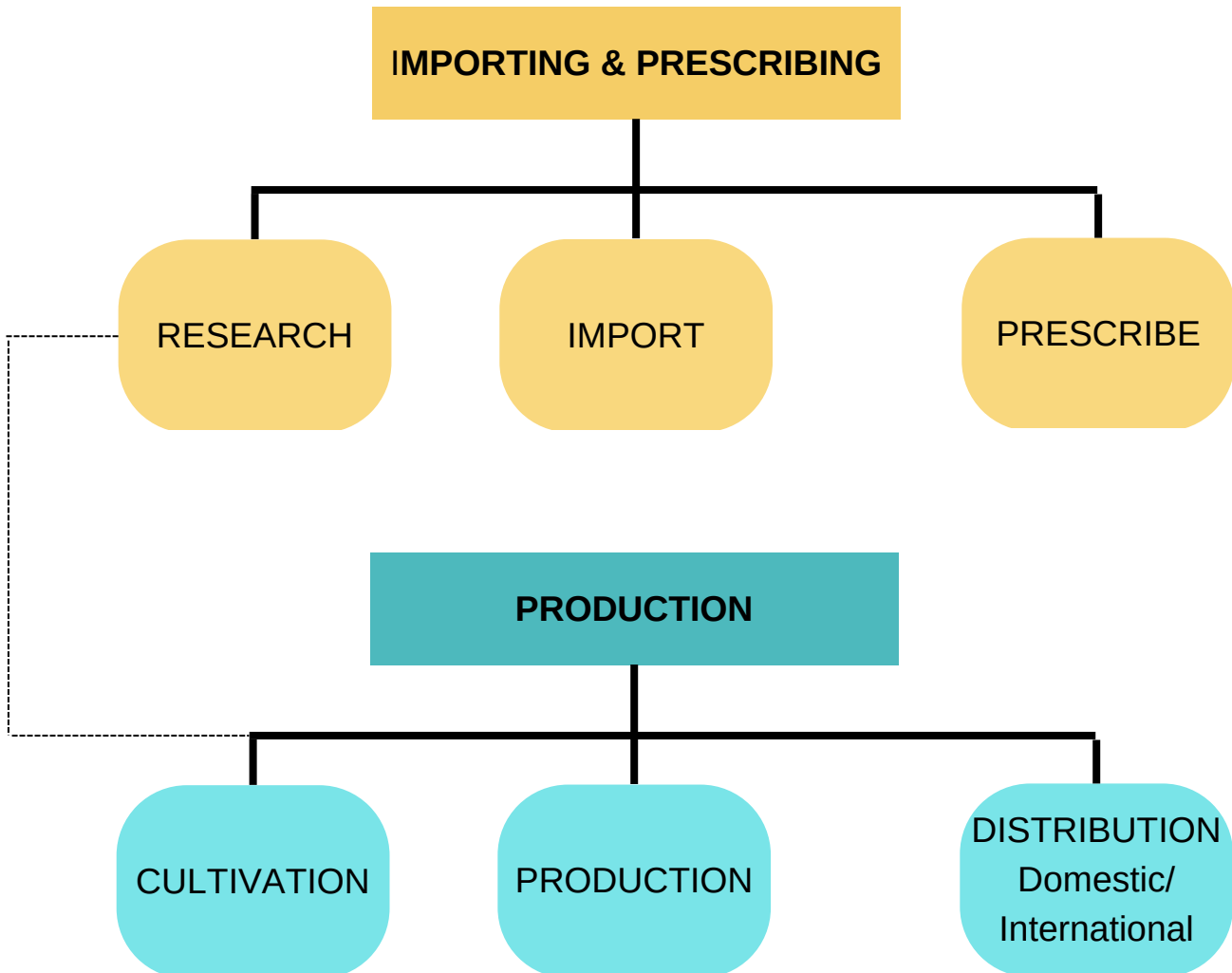
### **HEALTH PRACTITIONERS & PATIENTS**

To ensure there is support and training for the health practitioners and information for patients.

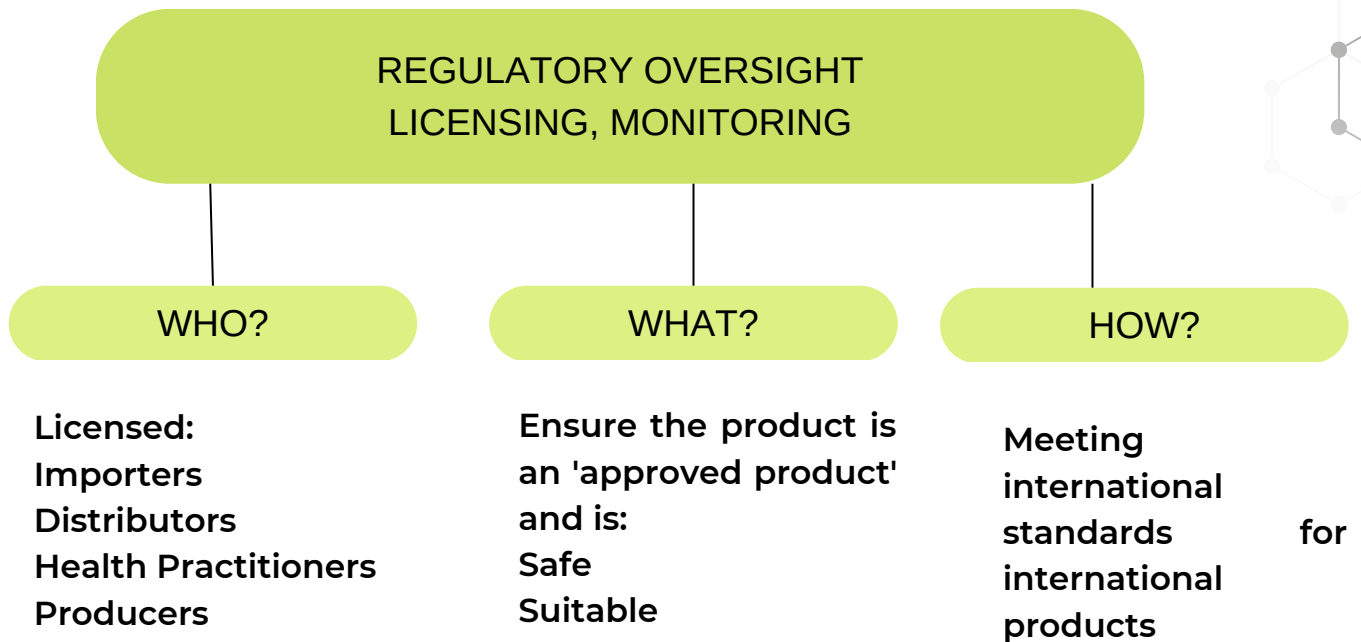
## B. PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW

The following information is collated from a limited review of information regarding developments in the use of medical cannabis in other jurisdictions.

### STAGES:



## REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS



## POTENTIAL BENEFITS & RISKS

### BENEFITS

- Allow access to cannabis medication for a range of conditions such as: chronic pain, insomnia, depression, anxiety, multiple sclerosis, cancer pain.
- Economic advantages - potential new industry for local businesses to develop domestic and international products
- Increase visitors to the Cook Islands

### RISKS

- Resources - the costs to set up the system and regulate it
- Still a relatively new area
- Lack of expertise/capacity/labour

## C. SUMMARY



The use of medical cannabis is new to the Cook Islands therefore it is critical to ensure that all relevant matters are considered in the development of a framework to:

- ensure ongoing research, education and training is undertaken
- allow for medical cannabis to be imported, prescribed and produced in the Cook Islands
- ensure that all risks are carefully considered and managed
- put measures in place to regulate the industry

It will require resources for these matters to be expanded on.