

Kava Pilot Phase 2: Allowing the commercial importation of kava

Consultation Feedback

Potential changes to allow for the commercial importation of kava

Question 1: Are you supportive of the use of import permits (option 2) to allow kava importation to be controlled and monitored?

I would prefer option 1 as per New Zealand. I would have concerns that permits, and other associated costs and regulation would make it too hard for smaller (or people trying to create) businesses to compete against larger companies. Option1 allows small private users the ability to purchase at reasonable price without undue govern interference. It would encourage smaller start-up companies an easier road to import

Question 2: Under option 2 what requirements or conditions do you think are responsible and necessary to be placed on commercial entities in order to allow them to import commercial qualities of kava?

With Option 1 you still need to follow Food Standard regulations 2.6.3 and this can be amended to add more things such as guidelines in the correct use and destruction of kava and driving awareness under the influence of kava.

State and Territory regulations can regulate and license the distribution of kava from the uniform national Poison Standard and Food Standard.

All businesses are required to meet OH&S standards and Audits (record keeping, storage) and ATO records (income and loss).

Question 3: In addition to state and territory government restrictions on the supply and consumption of kava within their jurisdictions, what other restrictions should be imposed on holders of permits for importing kava into Australia?

Nil. New Zealand and United States of America have demonstrated that their systems work with no major negative outcomes (compared to alcohol and drug use).

Do not need to invent a whole new system and process when the are ones already working successfully that we can copy. as Kava is not addictive physically and its effects are easily over come and nowhere as dangerous as say alcohol it fits in better in option 1 otherwise we need to restrict coca cola etc...There is also no withdrawal symptoms on the cessation of kava

Impacts of Kava

Question 5: What are your views on the potential health, social and cultural impacts of kava, and do you have any evidence to share?

I have been a regular kava drinker for years with no issues. In my time in Vanuatu and Australia drinking kava at commercial and private sessions I have seen very minimal effects of kava misuse unlike with alcohol and other legally obtainable substances. There is no evidence of kava induced psychosis in the world, whereas there is clear medical evidence for other substance induces psychosis. Kava is well recognised as an anxiolytic, which is both beneficial and non-addictive.

For those that have or will misuse kava the longer-term physical effects are reversible on the cessation of drinking kava, unlike alcohol, where can lead to health issues. Alcohol and drugs used excessively can lead to physical and mental issues (lack of cognitive function, poor appetite, poor general health, increased risk of BBV's, liver problems and serious long-term mental health issues).

Kava is recognised as a muscle relaxant (Valium of the Pacific) and is not a substance that has a strong psycho active effect. Judgment is not impaired.

Human nature over the course of time has proven that people will always look for something to alter their mood/mental state. I believe allowing kava and other drug use does. There is also strong evidence to suggest that all health impacts from kava are reversible once kava is stopped.

When I have drunk kava it has been done in a group, promoting fellowship and social interactions. In my time living in Vanuatu I witness the majority of kava drinkers would enjoy a few shells at the nakamal (kava bar) and then proceed on home. Most often the effects have worn off by the time you get home as you are no longer 'allowing' it to relax you. It calms anxiety and helps promote good sleep. I have never witnessed physical or strong verbal unrest in a nakamal (unlike alcohol). There is ample evidence where Melanesian governments have encouraged Kava drinking as it has a downward impact on domestic violence this has been supported by numerous women in Vanuatu who I have spoken with.

It is believed with kava drinkers that drinking alcohol after the use of kava can increase the effects of the alcohol (so one would question with the reports was it the kava or the alcohol creating social harms?). Like any substance that is misused it can create relationship distress, however someone effected by kava is far less likely to be dangerous than someone effected by alcohol.

In my experience in Vanuatu the relationship distress was more over the financial cost of kava drinking in a third world country on minimal income with high unemployment rate.

Overall, I see less risk to social harms than the risks associated with other substances such as alcohol, prescribed strong medications being misused or illicit drugs.

In regard to concerns of driving under the effects of kava, in my time in Vanuatu I found most kava drinkers to be able to drive safely on the road (if anything a little slower and more cautiously). Literature clearly states cognition is not affected so judgement about driving remains intact unlike alcohol

Question 6: Are you concerned about any particular risks that may be caused by allowing the commercial importation of kava?

I have no concerns. I prefer it and its effects over alcohol. Also see a need for the customs and the respect of kava drinking to be promoted with all people consuming kava. Educations and awareness will help promote responsible drinking of kava unlike NT where it was misused and unclear if these customs were explained in these communities and the importance of them.

Question 7: Do you have any suggestions for how to limit any potential negative impacts or risks of using kava and / or commercially importing kava into Australia?

Nil other than in commercial outlets remain unlicensed so alcohol and Kava are not encouraged together and that no consumption of alcohol to be encouraged when drinking Kava. Commercial outlets are required to police and educate responsible drinking of kava and like hotels the proprietor is to be directed to limit usage/ consumption and have penalties for all of the above.

Question 8: What benefits may be achieved from commercially importing kava into Australia?

Support the economy of our pacific third world countries at a grass roots level up. Increase in business for freight and custom brokers, increase tax revenue. We have many seasonal workers in Australia that would drink kava, this helps them keep their connection to their culture and what they know and in our experience, it clearly reduces the use of alcohol.

Opportunities for new businesses and growth and expansion (kava chocolate etc) in a time where we need economic growth.

Some people may choose to be regular Kava drinkers instead of using other substances which would reduce crime rates "violence" etc. and they would have the knowledge that a regular supply is viable and at a reasonable price.

Question 9: What businesses may be involved in the commercial importation and supply of kava and how will kava potentially be priced, marketed and retailed?

Online, supermarkets, kava bars. I think as per any product you should have a RRP and let the business market how they wish. You can find anything online. An open market is an open market criminal Hx checks should be used and those actively bankrupted should not be allowed to participate

Monitoring and evaluation

Question 10: What methods should be used to monitor and evaluate the success and impacts of the pilot?

Consumer and Importer Surveys, income reports from ATO and other methods that you already have implemented for other products. Health and police report associated kava presentation and Importation declarations.

Question 11: What methods should be used to monitor and evaluate the health, social, economic and regulatory impacts of kava consumption during the pilot?

As per above. Hospital records via medicare data records for Kava related presentations verses alcohol and other drug presentations. Police crime Statistics

Question 12: Who may be able to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the pilot?

Importers, retail outlets and consumers, Health and policing services

Question 13: What data should be collected to effectively measure the health, social, and economic and regulatory impacts of kava?

Get your data through the reports from state regulations, surveys, Police reports and Hospital records via Medicare data records for Kava related presentations verses alcohol and other drug presentations

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Feedback

My family and I have been drinking kava for over 30 years. I have a full-time employment and am held in high regard as is the rest of my family including my parents that are both high level health professionals. I find it a way to relax and socially interact with others without negative effects as is associated with alcohol.

I work with seasonal workers and majority of them prefer kava over alcohol. Since borders were closed and they can no longer get kava into the country with incoming groups, a lot of them have turned to alcohol. Since this time, there has been an increase in property damage and physical violence and general mess around our properties. This is a significant change from when they had their own kava to drink.

With all substances there are associated risks. I prefer the risks associated with kava over alcohol as they are minimal.

I believe that alcohol is a lot more accepted as it has always been here in our culture and is legal. Pacific countries have had kava for years, New Zealand and USA have proven that it can be done with no major negative impacts and minimal government interference.

My family and I would like to become importers of kava from Vanuatu for commercial use (Kava House Kava to be precise – directors Frank King and Julia Malas – best kava we have had).