



**Feleoko 'a Maui**

**Submissions in support of the Pilot Program to ease restrictions on the importation of  
kava for personal use**

**22 March 2019**

These submissions are provided on behalf of Feleoko 'a Maui to the:

Office of Drug Control  
Department of Health  
GPO Box 9848  
Canberra ACT 2601



## **A. Introduction**

1. Feleoko 'a Maui (F'aM) is a family owned business that commenced with a simple dream - to support a family, community and fonua (country), in the Kingdom of Tonga and in Australia.
2. With over 30 years of farming experience, Feleoko 'a Maui uses a traditional Tongan method of planting and cultivating crop.
3. In 2016, Feleoko 'a Maui invested in a small organic farm in the pristine untouched island of 'Eua, in the Kingdom of Tonga. This consists of over 8 acres of traditionally owned farm land in 'Eua planted with kava, talo (taro), 'ufi (yams) and kape (giant kape).
4. F'aM's farming technique is based off traditional Tongan methods handed down from generations. The crop is wholly organic. The organic produce has been sold in the market in 'Eua, also shipped overseas to consumers.
5. Feleoko 'a Maui or "Feleoko 'o Maui" the name of the marketplace in 'Eua, is sourced from Tongan oral history, known as the produce or plantations of the Tongan deity, Maui. This is also used to describe the island of 'Eua, also known as Funga Fonua. Recognised for its rich soil and organically cultivated produce.
6. It's kava plantation of over 8 acres of pristine virgin land in the island of 'Eua, receive second prize in the Royal Agricultural Show in 2018, first time it decided to enter the competition.
7. F'aM is also a corporate sponsor and member of the Brisbane Tongan Community Inc. (BTC) that represents the Tongan nationals and migrants residing in Brisbane, Queensland.
8. F'aM is based in Brisbane, Queensland, put supports a number of charities, including Brisbane Tongan Community Inc., Pasifika Lawyers Association of Queensland Inc. and migrants from Tonga, as well as supports the growers and labourers in 'Eua to maintain the business in Tonga.

## **B. Consultation**

9. We note that the ODC seeks feedback on:
  - (a) A proposal to increase the quantity of kava that may be imported for personal use to 4kg.



(b) Approach to evaluate the pilot program after two years; and

(c) The duration of the pilot program.

10. Feleoko 'a Maui has had the benefit of assisting in the preparation of the submissions provided by the BTC to the ODC and supports all the points put forth, however wishes to emphasis on the economic benefits to the Tongan kava growers and investors of Tongan heritage residing in Brisbane.

### **C. Feleoko 'a Maui supports the proposal**

11. Feleoko 'a Maui as a business, investor, supports the proposal as detailed above, to increase the quantity of kava that may be imported for personal use from 2kg to 4kg.

12. Feleoko 'a Maui would like to be involved in the approach or consultation to evaluate the pilot program after two years.

### **D. Kava**

13. Kava or kava kava or *piper methysticum* is a cash crop, of Pasifika (Pacific Islands / Oceania).<sup>1</sup>

14. The word *kava* is Tongan, meaning "bitter".

15. It is a significant export for Tonga that has been used traditionally in the Kingdom of Tonga from the tenth century, thus pre-dating the effective sovereignty in Australia and is vital to Tongans in the island Kingdom and diaspora.

16. Other names for kava include:

- 'awa (Hawai'i),
- 'ava (Samoa),
- yaqona (Fiji),
- sakau (Pohnpei); and
- malok or malogu (parts of Vanuatu).

17. Kava is consumed throughout the Pasifika cultures of Oceania, for either traditional ceremonies as in the Kingdom of Tonga and Fiji, also in recent years in social kava clubs and kava bars.

18. The root of the kava plant is used to produce an entheogenic drink with sedative, anesthetic and euphoriant properties. Its active ingredients are called kavalactones.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Maxwell Churchward, (1959) *Tongan Dictionary: Tongan-English and English-Tongan*, Tonga: The Government of Tonga Printing Press, p.257.



Where clinical trials in 2013 by the University of Melbourne has concluded that it was likely to be more effective at treating anxiety and insomnia.<sup>2</sup>

19. For our Tongan community, kava is a part of our cultural traditions rooted in a long history that has thrived for centuries and is practised within the diasporic communities in New Zealand, the United States of America, and Australia.

#### **E. Cultural significance of kava to Tongans in Australia**

20. Feleoko 'a Maui supports the submissions put forth by the BTC on the cultural significance of kava to Tongans in Australia, in maintaining its traditional cultural practises (*anga fakatonga*), these include, but are not limited to the following, which are continued in the Diaspora:

- (d) Kava ceremonies – from the *taumafa kava* reserved for Royal ceremonies;
- (e) Traditional ceremonies – weddings, funerals, birthdays, social gatherings, fundraisers;
- (f) Kava clubs – social groups for men in the community that meet every weekend;
- (g) Church – functions, welcoming preachers (*talitali malanga*);
- (h) Tongan courtships – when a gentlemen visits or wishes to court a Tongan woman;
- (i) Reconciliation – when a family member or extended family members wish to seek forgiveness from their elders, for instance, when a couple decide to get married without their respective parents' blessing.

21. The current allowable quantity of 2kg is insufficient to support “personal use” amongst the diaspora.

#### **F. Business opportunities**

- G. Feleoko 'a Maui would requests any opportunity to import as a business to provide to the community in the diaspora.
- H. The alternative for this small business would be to apply for a licence to import under the medicinal umbrella or seek to negotiate with the major pharmaceutical companies that provide herbal medicine with kava extracts, such as TakiMai, Bioglen, Nature's Way and so forth.

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<sup>2</sup> University of Melbourne. (2013, May 13). World first clinical trial supports use of Kava to treat anxiety. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved March 21, 2019 from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/05/130513095750.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/05/130513095750.htm)



- I. Our aim is to expand our business in Brisbane once we are able to harvest and also assist in rebuilding family properties that were devastated during the cyclone Gita in Tonga, as well as capacity build.

**J. Conclusion**

22. As detailed above, kava is an essential part of our Tongan traditional practices.
23. We support the easing of the restrictions as it not only provides for the needs of our people in the diaspora, but also assist in the economic growth in the Kingdom of Tonga.
24. Feleoko 'a Maui is committed to working together with the ODC and the government in the Commonwealth of Australia, the Kingdom of Tonga in providing better services and opportunities for our Tongan people and greater Pasifika region.

Mālō 'aupito



## GLOSSARY

<i>Anga fakatonga</i>	Tongan way of life, tradition and culture
Diaspora	“...scattered throughout many nations” and “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship.”
<i>Fakatonga</i>	Tongan, like or pertaining to Tongans, in the Tongan manner.
<i>Fāмили</i>	Tongan word for family, hono fāмили means member of one’s family.
<i>Kāinga</i>	Tongan word for relation, relative; brother or sister in the sense of comrade or compatriot. The extended family.
<i>Kalapu</i>	Means a club or group.
<i>Kava</i>	Either the plant ( <i>Piper methysticum</i> ) or the mildly narcotic beverage made from its crushed root. <sup>3</sup>
Kava Ceremony	Ceremonial presentation on a large scale and with a big piece of kava plant in the lead. That is the presentation by the people of Kolovai. Feast given in someone’s honour on certain occasions, such as circumcision, marriage, winning of a prize or scholarship. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C. Maxwell Churchward, (1959) *Tongan Dictionary: Tongan-English and English-Tongan*, Tonga: The Government of Tonga Printing Press, p.257.

<sup>4</sup> C. M. Churchward, *op cit.* pp. 257-258.



**ATTACHMENT 1. Photos of Feleoko 'a Maui's plantation in 'Eua, Kingdom of Tonga**



*Photos from the kava farm in 'Eua*

