

17 September 2004

## **Government Bill will keep people safe, alive - STANZ**

The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand today congratulated the Government for taking an evidence-based, harm-minimisation approach to legal energy products.

The Government's Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill Number Three proposes a new fourth schedule under the Act to properly regulate and control the sale and marketing of legal social tonics.

STANZ represents the manufacturers, marketers and distributors of these products.

"Earlier this year we met with Minister Anderton and asked him to take this step to legally regulate the sector, which is what has happened," said STANZ spokesperson Matt Bowden.

"Our members have already endorsed an 18 year age limit on the sale of these products as a socially responsible risk management option, given the low risk that these products pose.

"We are delighted that the Minister has decided to apply a commonsense option to managing harm minimisation," said Mr Bowden.

Mr Bowden said the Government had taken an evidence-based approach to the issue.

"The Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs has found that social tonics, such as Benzylpiperazine, are safe, but are not suitable for children. This is what we have been saying all along," he said.

Mr Bowden said the fact that more than five million of these products had been sold in New Zealand over the last five years was a testament to their safety and to their value as safe alternatives to illegal drugs.

"These products were originally designed to keep people away from illegal drugs such as methamphetamine and I am sure the availability of these products has saved lives. I am sure that their ongoing, controlled availability will become an integral component of the Government's harm minimisation strategies," he said.

"I am delighted the Government appears to acknowledge this. If we keep enough safe non-addictive alternatives to dangerous drugs available in society, we greatly reduce the harm and tragedy associated with illegal drug use."

Mr Bowden said the Government's approach to this issue appeared to be an excellent example of the harm minimization model in practice.

STANZ has been developing an industry-wide Code of Practice since February which will further bind members in terms of regulating the production, marketing and sale of these products.

Over 400 submissions, including from District Health Boards and Government agencies, have been made to the draft Code of Practice which can be viewed at [www.stanz.org.nz](http://www.stanz.org.nz).

Over 98 per cent of the submissions endorsed the objectives of the Code, including prohibiting sales to under 18 year olds and limiting the amount of some ingredients allowed per serving. The Code will be launched publicly in six weeks.

Contact Matt Bowden: 021 772 323